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The research question addressed is, what can one learn about the interlanguage of Spanish-speaking ELLs in an ABE program from their choices between simple past and past progressive verb forms, explanations of their choices, and corresponding choices of verb forms in L1? A key influence was Klein's analysis of tense and aspect. In this study, eight participants made forced choices between simple past and past progressive in three short narratives involving pictures and text. In an immediate retrospective protocol in L1, they reported reasons for their choices and then, prompted by the pictures without text, retold the stories. The most common reason for their selection of aspectual morphology was their perception of whether action was completed or ongoing, but several participants gave erroneous or idiosyncratic explanations for some choices. Degree of comprehension of the forms did not correlate with length of formal study of English.

COMPREHENSION OF ASPECT IN ENGLISH BY SPANISH-SPEAKING
STUDENTS IN AN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I have always loved the intricacies of the English language. Crossword puzzles, idioms, and the transfer of words between languages have all fascinated me as long as I can remember. I was thrilled to discover through Chaucer's writing that English had changed over the centuries. High school English lessons on diagramming sentences were of no interest to most of my classmates, but they intrigued me. What a great tool for codifying and visualizing what we all did unconsciously when we spoke!

Studying other languages helped me better understand the structure of English. From third to sixth grade, I attended weekly Hebrew classes. This gave me exposure to a considerably different language. After initially being aware only of the strange-looking alphabet, which was read right-to-left, I soon learned other ways in which languages could be different from English. For example, not only did Hebrew nouns have gender, but verbs and adjectives had to agree in gender and number with their corresponding nouns.

In seventh grade, I began studying French, which was easier – verbs did not have gender, and the vocabulary was much more familiar. By the time I got to college, I had learned enough to struggle through a literature course conducted entirely in French. I could read without frequent dictionary use, write competently, and converse with patient speakers. Now, many years later, I have retained most of those skills. I credit this to a few vacations in Quebec and France, a 3-month stay in a town outside Paris, occasional visits from foreign French speakers with shaky English, being a bystander during my

children's high school French classes, watching French films with only half an eye on the subtitles, and periodic efforts to read French texts ranging from bilingual appliance-operation instructions to classic fiction.

Of course, none of these efforts resulted in fluency – far from it. In addition to lacking speed, I never could and still cannot appreciate or produce subtlety, slang, or most historical or cultural references. Realizing this makes me appreciate both my fluency in English and the challenges involved in learning a second language.

My love of English eventually led me to a volunteer position teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. My students knew enough vocabulary to communicate fairly well with an attentive listener, which was similar to my facility in speaking French. However, I had been an academic learner of a foreign language, so my grammar was relatively good. My students knew little formal grammar even in their own language, and their English was riddled with grammatical errors. They wanted to get better jobs, and so wanted to speak better English. Among other things, that meant their grammar had to improve.

One of the many challenges that confronted them was learning the English tense-aspect system. The system is quite complex; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) devote two chapters of their text to the subject. Even a small piece of that system, like the different meanings and uses of simple versus progressive aspect in past tense, caused problems for my students. During lessons specifically addressing the topic, they did fine, but that was not the case in ordinary conversation. Some students seemed to use progressive all the time, e.g. "I'm sorry I wasn't coming to class yesterday." If I pointed

this out, the students knew why and how to correct themselves, but the same problems would re-emerge quickly.

This happened with other grammatical constructs as well, but this one particularly struck me. When I mentioned this point to other ESL teachers, there was much agreement that the different forms of past tense were particularly challenging. I mentioned my interest in this area to a friend who had moved to the U.S. from Russia 14 years previously, and she said she still struggled with it, because the aspect system in Russian is different from the system in English (personal conversation with Galena Tsypis, August 30, 2003). Finally, another non-native-speaker friend whose written English is flawless said she still “gets lazy” when speaking, and does not always think about what aspect to use (personal conversation with Melonia Adem, November 16, 2003). This was surprising, because her first language (L1) was Spanish, which has many similarities with English in its use of aspect. Based on these experiences, I decided that aspect in past tense would be my thesis topic.

As noted above, these were verb forms my students were familiar with; they used them frequently, although often inappropriately. The textbooks I have used introduce progressive aspect (e.g., *I am making the bed*) early in the curriculum, with simple past and past progressive (*I made the bed, I was making the bed*) not long after, generally by the low intermediate level. These verb forms are reviewed frequently in subsequent lessons (Veramendi, Grognet & Crandall, 2002). My students were at the high intermediate or low advanced level. Since they generally had not been in that particular program very long, they may not have used the same textbooks in their previous classes.

However, other ESL texts for adult learners used similar timing (Molinsky & Bliss, 2001; Richards, Hull & Proctor, 2004).

I feel it is important for my students to comprehend the difference between “I was making a bed” and “I made a bed” because being able to distinguish between the two forms has practical implications. In simplest terms, past progressive indicates that an action was in progress at the time being discussed, while simple past indicates that the action had already been completed at the time. Take for example:

(1) John was reading when Sue entered.

The time that is being referred to in sentence (1) is the moment when Sue entered, or to be specific, finished entering. At that time, Sue’s action, which is expressed in the simple past form, is completed. However, John’s action, which is expressed in the past progressive form, has not been completed; he is in the middle of reading (Comrie, 1976; Klein, 1994).

As I learned from coursework, native speakers interpret verb forms in this way unconsciously. One can imagine the problems this could create for non-native speakers. As a practical example, suppose a housekeeper at a hotel wants to report having completed a specific task. A native speaker would say something like:

(2) I cleaned the rooms on the fifth floor before lunch.

However, an ELL who has not mastered aspectual distinctions might say instead,

(3) I was cleaning the rooms on the fifth floor before lunch.

A native speaker supervisor would probably infer from sentence (3) that the room-cleaning task had been begun but not finished before lunch, and might erroneously

conclude that the housekeeper was a slow worker. Conversely, assume the housekeeper had not completed the task, but nonetheless gave statement (2) in answer to a question about his or her progress. If the supervisor then found one of the fifth floor rooms still dirty, he or she might conclude that the housekeeper had lied – not a desirable outcome.

The different aspects in English also have specific uses in narratives. As exemplified by: “Mr. McGregor *was* on his hands and knees *planting* out young cabbages, but he *jumped* up and *ran* after Peter....” (Potter, 1902), progressive aspect is typically used for background or descriptive elements, while simple past is used for events (Silva-Corvalán, 1983, cited in Salaberry, 2003). For ELLs who are struggling to understand English, knowing this would make narratives easier to comprehend.

These basic uses would make the most difference for ELLs at the intermediate/low advanced level of the students I typically teach, because they are still struggling with the rudiments of communication in English. However, I like to think they will eventually learn some of the more subtle functions of aspect. For example, it can specify the sequence of actions in time. Carlota Smith contrasts “Mary was swimming when the bell rang” with “Mary swam when the bell rang”, pointing out that in the first sentence, Mary was already swimming when the bell rang, but in the second sentence, the swimming began when the bell rang (Smith, 1991, 102).

The choice of aspect in sentences with *when* can differentiate causation from mere juxtaposition of events. Suppose that Stan and Fred both needed jobs. Compare sentences (4) and (5):

(4) When he heard that the Acme Company had some jobs open, Stan was

driving to Fred's house.

(5) When he heard that the Acme Company had some jobs open, Stan drove to Fred's house.

Did Stan drive to Fred's because of what he heard? Most native speakers would say "no" if given sentence (4) and "yes" if given sentence (5). I like to think that my students might eventually understand English well enough to draw the same conclusions.

Given the complexities of aspect in English, I wanted to learn more so that I could teach this area of grammar more effectively to the adult English language learners in my class. I wanted more information as to what learners absorb from what they are taught, what makes them misunderstand the forms or use them incorrectly, and what goes through their minds as they choose verb forms.

I decided to focus on only two verb forms, simple past and past progressive. Essentially, I wanted to ask a single question, *What do you understand about these two verb forms?* in multiple situations, to get as full and thoughtful a response as possible. What made sense to me was to ask participants to make their own choices between the two forms, and then explain their choices.

Thus, my research question became: "What can one learn about the interlanguage of Spanish-speaking ELLs in an ABE program from their choices between simple past and past progressive verb forms, their explanations of their choices, and their corresponding choices of verb forms in L1?" I hoped that the results of this study would be useful in designing lessons, activities, and reviews which would help me use my students' time to better advantage and improve their mastery of these forms. Other

teachers of adult ESL and researchers studying aspect could also find the results of interest.

The next chapter gives background on current research on aspect, both for native speakers and English language learners. It also compares aspect in past tense for English and Spanish, since my subjects' L1 was Spanish. Chapter Three presents my research questions and gives a comprehensive account of the methods I used to gather data. The results are reported and discussed in Chapter Four. Finally, in Chapter Five, I consider some implications of this study, assess its limitations, and suggest potential avenues for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The goal of this project was to learn about ELLs' comprehension of aspect, as ~~expressed by simple past and past progressive~~. I wanted to gain insight into why ~~the meaning expressed by this morphosyntactic set of forms~~ was challenging, so that I could become a better teacher. The specific question addressed in this research is, “What can one learn about the interlanguage of Spanish-speaking ELLs in an ABE program from their choices between simple past and past progressive verb forms, their explanations of their choices, and their corresponding choices of verb forms in L1?”

Deleted: in past tense

~~In order to conduct an effective and practical study, and draw the most useful and~~ valid conclusions from the results, I needed to understand prior research in this area. Specifically, I had to answer the following questions: What is interlanguage? What do native speakers of English know about the difference between simple and progressive, particularly in past tense? How do native-speaking children and second-language learners develop mastery of these verb forms? How have visual images, such as I intended to use, been employed to elicit information on second language learners' knowledge of verb forms? What prior research addresses my particular question, and what can my study add to knowledge in this area? Finally, What is important to know about verb forms in the participants' L1, Spanish, as they relate to the English verb forms in this study? The remainder of this chapter addresses these questions.

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Interlanguage

My research into ELLs' comprehension of aspect relates to each participant's *interlanguage*. This term, introduced by Selinker (1969), refers to a learner's unique language system, which can be partially deduced from the output produced when the learner tries to use the target language. Although interlanguage is often inferred from the learner's production, it is also possible to ask learners directly about their understanding of L2 (Collins, 2005; Hu, 2002; Liskin-Gasparro, 2000), which is what I chose to do.

Interlanguage can involve transfer of L1 features to L2 (Selinker, 1969). Cantonese speakers studying English frequently used Cantonese syntax, especially when producing complex target structures, and indicated in interviews that sometimes they first thought in L1 and then translated into L2 (Chan, 2004). In a sentence involving both a place and an object, a Hebrew speaking student of English used the Hebrew order in an English sentence: "I will study in the university biology." (Selinker, 1992, p.198).

Interlanguage can also have features that do not come from L1 or L2. An English speaker learning Hebrew first tried to approximate Hebrew sounds with close English ones. However, if this tactic led to communication failures because too many Hebrew sounds were approximated by the same English sound, the learner would create a new, phonetically similar sound (Selinker 1992).

A given learner's interlanguage is variable at a single point in time, as well as over time (Huebner, 1985). It can depend on the communicative demands and discourse functions of the task: accuracy in use of articles with certain noun phrases was greater with a narrative task than in a sentence-level grammar test because such accuracy was

crucial to the listener's understanding of the narrative (Tarone & Parrish, 1988). It can also depend on the learner's emotional state at the time the target language is produced. Concentration on difficult subject matter or the presence of anxiety or other high emotion can result in less accuracy in form (Selinker, 1992). Interlanguage can also be different for comprehension and production; Lado (cited in Selinker, 1969) pointed out that a student who *says* "can he speaks" can *understand* "can he speak."

What can a one-time study, such as the present research, indicate about learners' interlanguage? Because of the variability discussed above, a one-time study can produce results that are internally inconsistent as well as incomplete. However, given these limitations, which I revisit in Chapter Five, such a study can provide valuable information. Indeed, many of the studies of L2 acquisition of aspect (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig & Bergstrom, 1996; Hinkel, 1992; and Liskin-Gasparro, 2000) are of this nature.

The Linguistic Concept of Aspect

Tense versus aspect

English verbs communicate two kinds of temporal information about events: tense and aspect (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). The question: "What do native English speakers know about the difference between simple and progressive in past tense?" is primarily a question about aspect. This section briefly differentiates between tense and aspect, and then discusses aspect on two levels – the sentence level and the discourse level. Both are important here because my study instrument used short

narratives rather than single sentences.

Tense reflects the relation of the time an utterance is made (TU) to the “topic time” (TT) referred to in the utterance (Klein, 1994). For example, both of the *past* tense utterances “John sang” and “John was singing” are assertions about a time prior to TU, while the *present* tense utterance “John is singing” refers to the same time as the utterance (Comrie, 1976, 2).

TT is analogous to Bull’s Axis of Orientation. When a person says, “John is singing” he is talking at the moment of the experience, and the axis of orientation is the “point present” (PP). When the person says, “John sang” he is recalling a previous PP, which is now a “retrospective point” (RP) (Bull, 1968).

The morphosyntactical difference between “John sang” and “John was singing” communicates an aspectual distinction. Aspect is not dependent on TU, but rather concerns how TT relates to “time of situation” (TSit), the time of the entire situation that the utterance refers to. TSit can be distinguished from TT by the following example:

- (1) What did you notice when you entered the room?
- (2) There was a book on the table.
- (3) The book was in Russian. (Klein, 1994, 4)

Sentence (1) specifies that TT is “when you entered.” The utterance (2) claims only that there was a book on the table at TT (the time of entrance), but world experience tells us that the *situation* of the book being on the table would have started before TT and continued past TT. TSit in utterance (2) is the entire period of the book’s being on the table. TSit in utterance (3) is the entire period of the book’s existence.

Situation types

As stated above, aspect concerns how TT relates to TSit. The relation depends on the type of situation described by the lexical content of the verb phrase. Vendler (1957) uses four classifications for lexical content, and Smith (1997) adds an additional one to Vendler's. These classifications involve duration, telicity, and dynamism. Klein's (1994) classification, on the other hand, limits itself to only the criterion of contrast over time, and defines three situation types. As discussed below, I used both Vendler/Smith's and Klein's classifications in designing my study instrument, so I will explain both systems and how they compare to each other before returning to how aspect is expressed morphologically in English and how situations relate to aspect.

Actually, Aristotle is given credit for being the first to classify verbs in this way, distinguishing in his *Metaphysics* between "verbs of kinesis" and "verbs of energeia:" "You are thinking and thereby have thought already; by contrast, you are learning [something] and have not learned [it] already." (Theta, 6 1048b cited in Klein, 1994). "Thinking" is an atelic verb, one that has no right boundary, or inherent endpoint, while "learning," a telic verb, does have a right boundary (Klein, 1994).

In addition to Aristotle's division depending on telicity, Vendler also took into account durativity (i.e. lasting for a period of time, in contrast to punctuality, which happens at one point in time) and dynamism (requirement of energy). This led to a four-way classification of verbs: stative, activity, accomplishment, and achievement (Vendler, 1957). Carlota Smith referred to these categories as *situation types*, and added a fifth category, semelfactives. The following table summarizes these situation types and

gives examples.

Table 1

Situation Types as Classified by Vendler and Smith

Stative	+durative; -telic; -dynamic	know the answer, love Mary
Activity	+durative; -telic; +dynamic	laugh, stroll in the park
Accomplishment	+durative; +telic; +dynamic	walk to school, learn Greek
Semelfactive	-durative; -telic; +dynamic	tap, knock
Achievement	-durative; +telic; +dynamic	win the race; reach the top

(Vendler, 1957; Smith, 1997)

Klein designates situations as 0-state, 1-state, or 2-state. An example of a 0-state situation is “be in Russian” as in, “The book was in Russian.” The situation of the book’s being in Russian at the TT is not in contrast to a different situation and time at which the book is not Russian. This lack of contrast characterizes 0-state situation descriptions (Klein, 1994). 0-state situations are –dynamic, and thus equivalent to a subset of Vendler’s stative situations (Vendler, 1957).

A 1-state situation can be contrasted with a possible different situation at a different time. For example, “There was a book on the table” describes the situation at the TT, and for a period before and after the TT (i.e. the TSit). However, there are other times, *outside* of the TSit of “be on the table,” where the book would not be on the table. This presents what Klein (1994) calls an “outside contrast”. 1-state situations are –telic,

and can be either -dynamic or +dynamic. If they are –dynamic, like “be on the table,” they would be stative according to Vendler. If they are +dynamic, they correspond to Vendler’s and Smith’s activities (Vendler, 1957, Smith, 1997).

A 2-state situation has an “inside contrast” in addition to the outside contrast. “Take the book off the table” is such a situation. As in the previous example, there is an outside contrast, for example between a possible time when the book was not yet on the table and TSit, when it was. However, there is also a second contrast, within the situation, between the book’s still being on the table (the “source state”) and its no longer being on the table (the “target state”) (Klein, 1994). Vendler’s accomplishments and achievements are both 2-state, since they are +telic (Vendler, 1957).

For my study instrument, I wanted situations with an inside contrast, so that, by choosing between verb forms, participants would also be choosing between a source state and a target state. So, I wanted most of the verbs to reflect 2-state situations. Furthermore, since there were to be stories with pictures, I wanted situations with duration – specifically, Vendler’s accomplishments.

Sentence-level aspect

Having defined various situation types, we can now get back to the main question of this section – what native speakers understand to be the difference between simple and progressive aspect.

In Bernard Comrie’s (1976) view, adopted by many other researchers (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 1992, 1996, 1998; Madden & Zwaan, 2003; Salaberry, 2003; and Shirai & Kurono, 1998), the basic aspectual distinction is between what is referred to as

“perfective,” an action viewed as a whole — from “the outside”— and “imperfective,” an action viewed as ongoing—from “within.” For example, in the sentence,

(4) John was reading when I entered

the second verb is in perfective aspect, and presents the action of entry in total. In contrast, the first verb is imperfective, and concerns only a part of John’s reading situation – somewhere in the middle, where the entrance occurs (Comrie, 1976, 3).

Klein considers Comrie’s description to be a difficult-to-understand metaphor, and instead connects the morphological aspect of verbs with the relation between TT (topic time) and TSit (time of situation). Consider, for the TT of “when [you] entered the room,” the situation of “she took the purse from his pocket.” While Klein (1994, p. 43) classifies this as 2-state, it also meets Vendler’s (1957) requirements for an accomplishment. If the purse did not get removed while the observer was watching, (i.e. the TT was only during the source state), this would be expressed by the progressive form “she was taking.” If the purse had already been removed by the time the observer got there (i.e. if TT was only during the target state), this would be expressed by the perfect form “she had taken.” And finally, if the observer saw the removal taking place, (i.e. if the situation changed from source state to target state during TT), this would be expressed by the simple form “she took.” (Klein, 1994).

Of course, most native speakers would not consciously differentiate between these forms with reference to source states and target states. Instead, they would associate the progressive form with noncompletion (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

Aspect in First Language

Grammatical aspect

It is useful for those studying second language acquisition to know about the order of acquisition of morphemes in L1 because in general, it is similar in L2 (Bailey, Madden & Krashen, 1974; Dulay & Burt, 1974; Larsen-Freeman, 1975). Children who learn English as L1 come to aspect relatively late in their acquisition of the language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Pinker, 1994; Shirai & Andersen, 1995). Brown's longitudinal studies of three children whom he called Adam, Eve, and Sarah (1973) determined that the children acquired 14 grammatical morphemes at different ages, but in the same sequence. Regular past tense was acquired after adding *-ing* to verbs, *-s* plurals, irregular past tense, possessives, and uncontracted "to be" as a copula, such as "is she coming?" Brown did not study past progressive as such, but found that auxiliary verbs (necessary to form past progressive) were acquired later still. DeVilliers and DeVilliers did a cross-sectional study of 21 children (1973) that showed results fairly consistent with Brown's.

Deleted: Many researchers, including

As noted above, children's use of auxiliary verbs comes later than use of either past (*-ed* or irregular) or progressive (*-ing*). The child studies cited above did not take into account use or absence of auxiliaries such as *is*, *was*, or *were*. Thus, they did not specifically address the use of *past* progressive versus simple past in English, the focus of my research. However, the studies of adult ELLs discussed below typically did address auxiliaries.

Lexical aspect

Children have been found to progress in their use of aspect according to what Robison (1990) termed the Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis (PAH). Anderson and Shirai (1995) summarize the hypothesis in this way: Children start out using past or perfective verb forms with accomplishment and achievement verbs, and progressive (for languages that have it) with activity verbs. They later apply past or perfective to activity and stative verbs, and progressive to accomplishment and achievement verbs. This progression is not absolute, but applies to the preponderance of children's speech.

The PAH for acquisition of many first languages, not just English, has been widely confirmed (Andersen & Shirai, 1996; Antinucci & Miller, 1976; Weist, Wysocka, Witkowski-Stadnik, Buczowska, & Konieczna, 1984). These studies involved speakers of Polish, Italian, and other European languages plus Chinese, Hebrew, and Japanese.

Aspect in Second Language Acquisition

Grammatical aspect

Adult ELLs learn past progressive later than simple past, both in terms of accuracy and frequency (Bailey, 1989). Bailey attributes the early inaccurate use of past progressive to transfer from present tense. In her study, two-thirds of the regular verbs the participants used were past progressive, while two-thirds of the irregular verbs were simple past. Bailey hypothesized that pastness and irregular form may be closely associated in learners' minds, and that learners may distinguish the meaning and use of past progressive from that of simple past by largely reserving past progressive for regular

verbs. As noted above, children learning acquire irregular simple past before regular simple past in L1. It may be that both children and adults start out by associating pastness and irregular form.

Second language acquisition of morphology requires mastery of both form and use (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). In one study of aspect in English, adults learned the proper forms before the proper use. A past-tense cloze exercise was given to adult ELLs whose L1s were Arabic, Japanese, Spanish, Turkish, and various other European and Asian languages. Relatively high formal accuracy was found even at lower levels: 69% for Level 1, 77% for Level 2, and around 90% for Levels 3-6. However, appropriate use scores were lower, with 30% at Level 1, 46% at Level 2, and between 55% and 73% for Levels 3-6 (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992).

Lexical aspect

Similar to findings that children follow the PAH, researchers have found evidence supporting the PAH in second language acquisition. Adult ESL students overused progressive forms for lexically durative verbs and simple past for punctual verbs (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). Subsequent studies involving adults learning French as well as English showed similar findings (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, 1998). French and Japanese ESL students used past markings initially for telic verbs, later for activities, and still later for statives (Collins, 2004). Evidence of PAH in adults is not limited to those learning Indo-European languages. Shirai and Kurono (1998) found evidence of PAH in adult students of Japanese.

Other uses of aspect

In addition to using different morphological forms to mark lexical distinctions, learners also use them for discourse functions. In narratives, native speakers distinguish between foreground events, during which the story line progresses, and background material, which elaborates or evaluates the foreground (Hopper, 1979). Second language learners also use different morphological forms to indicate foreground and background (Anderson, 2002; Salaberry, 2003). This phenomenon is referred to as the Discourse Hypothesis for second language acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig, 1994). For example, in one study, simple past was used more often in the foreground than in the background, and progressive forms (in all tenses) more often in the background (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998). The extent to which learners' use of morphological forms is governed by the Discourse versus Aspect hypotheses is a subject of continuing research (Bardovi-Harlig, 1994).

L2 learners' uses of tense/aspect morphology have not been explained solely by the Primacy of Aspect and Discourse hypotheses. Rafael Salaberry (2003) presented multiple-choice tasks in Spanish to L1 English speakers, and found that less-advanced learners tended to choose preterite forms for fictional texts and imperfect forms for the personal narratives, regardless of the verb type.

Use of Visual Images in Morphological Research

Because I intended to use stories involving pictures to elicit information about the participants' comprehension of aspect, it was useful to look at other studies that used visual images to study aspect. It is common to ask participants to retell excerpts of silent films, such as Chaplin's *Modern Times* (Bardovi-Harlig & Bergstrom 1996;

Liskin-Gasparro, 2000). In other studies, participants are asked to narrate picture stories (Bennett-Kastor, 2002; Von Stutterheim & Klein, 1989). Since I was researching comprehension rather than production, my study instrument included text as well as pictures. I found only one such study involving aspect. It used pairs of pictures, one showing an event in progress and the other showing the event as finished. Native English speakers were asked to match one of the pictures to a single sentence in either perfective or imperfective aspect (Madden & Zwaan, 2003).

Prior Studies Addressing My Research Question

The research into aspect in second language acquisition provides few direct answers to my specific question, which is what L2 learners understand to be the difference between past progressive and simple past in English. In one study (Hinkel, 1992), students who had been admitted to a Big Ten university were presented with simple sentences (such as “Bob is talking to his brother”) in various tense/aspect combinations, and asked to decide whether the action was a) progressive, b) repetitive/habitual, c) none of the above, or d) cannot decide. The L1 Spanish speakers in the study made the right choice only 50% of the time for past progressive and 42% for simple past. This suggests that even relatively advanced ESL students have trouble understanding aspectual distinctions, but does not give insight into the source of their misunderstanding.

I found two tense-aspect studies that used actual interviews. Liskin-Gasparro gave participants (L1 English speakers learning Spanish) two narrative tasks: orally

recounting a segment of a Charlie Chaplin film, and telling a personal experience. She then did a stimulated recall to ask participants why they made the aspectual choices they did. In her study, the narrative tasks influenced the aspectual choices as much as lexical concerns, but many of the responses related to lexical aspect and the impact of instruction. In terms of lexical aspect, some students chose preterite or imperfective in accordance with the Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis. In addition, most participants explained some choices in terms of rules they had been taught; for example, use imperfective for an action that is interrupted; use preterite for an action that happens quickly. All of her participants had studied academic Spanish as a second language; in fact three of them taught it (Liskin-Gasparro, 2000.) My participants, in contrast, were studying L2 in a non-academic, ABE setting, and some had far less formal education as well.

Collins (2005) studied Mandarin Chinese and Japanese speakers in an intensive university ESL program. The participants were presented with target items (interspersed with non-target items) where the native speaker response was simple past. They had to choose among (in randomized order) simple past, future, and another form (present for statives, past progressive for activities, present perfect for telics). The test was computerized, so response times were measured. In retrospective interviews, participants were asked about target items where they gave an incorrect response, or a correct but delayed response.

Unfortunately for my research, which concentrated on accomplishment verbs, Collins only reported on participants' responses regarding statives, other than to say that

vague responses, such as “just a feeling” (p 212) were more frequently reported for non-statives. However, it is interesting to note that the responses frequently indicated awareness of statives as a semantic category. Some comments explained non-target use of present tense for statives because they are frequently shown in present tense in classroom materials. Other responses for statives indicated what Collins called the “third person singular *s* rule,” to the effect that students, under the time pressure of the computerized task, had automatically used present so that verbs used with third person singular subjects could end in *s*.

The three studies discussed above all addressed comprehension of aspect in past tense, but none combined all the elements of my research question. Accordingly, the gap in the literature that my study sought to fill was to find out directly, from learners at the ABE level, what they understood to be the difference between simple past and past progressive, particularly when applied to accomplishment verbs.

Aspect in Spanish and English

The use of aspect for past tense in Spanish, my participants’ L1, is similar, but not identical, to its use in English. In this section, I give a brief overview of the similarities and differences, and comment specifically on the particular use of past tense I focused on in this study.

To communicate an action as being in the past, there are two morphological forms in Spanish, preterite and imperfect. Preterite is used when an action is completed in the past, or begins or ends at a certain point:

- (5) Celia caminó toda la tarde. (preterite) (Dozier & Iguina, 1999, p. 178)
Celia walked all afternoon.

Imperfect is used when there is no reference to the beginning or end of an action.

- (6) Cuando la vi, Celia caminaba hacia su casa. (imperfect)
When I saw her, Celia was walking towards her house.

Salaberry (2003) summarizes by saying that the choice between preterite and imperfect verbal endings is determined by an aspectual contrast; perfective or imperfective respectively. This distinction is analogous to English.

The distinction is not always so sharp. Imperfect is used for habitual acts, but preterite is used for repetitive acts, where the number of such acts is specified. Contrast

(7) with (8):

- (7) Celia caminaba todas las tardes por una hora. (imperfect)
Celia used to walk in the afternoons for one hour.
- (8) Caminé tres veces hasta la tienda. (preterite)
She walked three times to the store. (Dozier & Iguina, 1999, p. 178)

In each of these examples, the Spanish preterite is translated into English by the simple past. The Spanish imperfect corresponds to either the English past progressive or habitual. I did not use any habitual or repetitive actions in the study instrument.

There are also specific verbs in Spanish which change meaning between the imperfect and the preterite. For example, the verb *saber* means “to know” (e.g. as a language) in imperfect (*sabia*) but “to find out” (*supe*) in preterite. I did not use the English equivalents of any of these verbs.

Spanish has a progressive tense that can be combined with other tenses to emphasize that an action is or was in progress. Both imperfect progressive and preterite

progressive are typically translated into English as past progressive.

- (9) Estaba oyendo música. (imperfect progressive)
I was listening to music.
- (10) Estuve oyendo música hasta que salimos. (preterit progressive)
I was listening to music until we went out. (Repaso, 1997, p. 153)

Use of preterite progressive indicates that the action was completed when it was interrupted by another event (Lawless, 2007). Since its translation in English is past progressive (because the English past progressive expresses both imperfective and progressive meanings) this could lead to confusion for ELLs. In this study, only one participant used preterite progressive, and I used care in interpreting the results.

In summary, although there are definite differences between English and Spanish use of aspect in past tense, there are some situations where a bilingual speaker would always use Spanish preterite for English simple past and vice versa, and Spanish imperfect for English past progressive and vice versa. As discussed in the next chapter, I limited my study to those situations.

Conclusion

To summarize this chapter: morphological aspect has been of great interest to researchers studying both native and non-native speakers of many languages. There are commonalities across languages; progressive and simple aspect are closely associated with ongoing and completed actions, respectively. The two aspects are also associated with different functions in discourse – background and foreground.

In terms of language acquisition, there is considerable evidence for a Primacy of

Aspect Hypothesis, wherein both children and second language learners start out assigning each aspect to particular classifications of verbs based on their inherent aspect, and then extend their usage to other verb classifications.

My project extends existing research by specifically asking ELLs to verbalize their understanding of the difference between simple past and past progressive. It is similar to Liskin-Gasparro's (2000) stimulated recall study, but uses a different group of participants. Hers were not only L1 English speakers learning Spanish (and mine the reverse), but also graduate students with fairly good command of their L2 and sophisticated knowledge of grammar, whereas mine are Adult Basic Education students, some with no formal education after the sixth grade. It also extends Collins's (2005) study by focusing on accomplishment verbs and an ABE participant group.

The next chapter presents my research method, data collection tools, and means of data analysis. It also describes the participants and location of the study. It ends with my hypotheses as to the results of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting my research question. It then describes the methodology used for the research and the reasons for choosing it. I present the details of the study instrument and, in the section on “expected choices,” describe the rationale for a change I made, after my first review of the data, to a tool for assessing the responses. The chapter continues with descriptions of the study participants, location and data compilation techniques, and ends with my hypotheses as to the results of the study.

The basic question I sought to answer was: “What can one learn about the interlanguage of Spanish-speaking ELLs in an ABE program from their choices between simple past and past progressive verb forms, their explanations of their choices, and their corresponding choices of verb forms in L1?” As is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, most of the eight participants in the study were under age 40 and had been in the U.S. for 4 years or less. They were studying ESL at a Midwestern social services agency.

Overview of the Study

Research method

I sought insight into ELLs’ comprehension of a particular aspect of grammar, preferably by asking them directly about it. The research method that seemed to fit most closely with that goal was introspection; particularly, stimulated recall. Gass and Mackey (2000) have studied this method extensively and concluded that it is appropriate for

studying declarative, or *rule* knowledge (as opposed to procedural, or *how-to* knowledge) in second language acquisition, which is exactly what I wanted to do.

Study instrument

There were several requirements that my study instrument had to meet. First, it had to provide choices between past progressive and simple past verb forms. It had to supply rather than elicit the two verb forms, so that the task would be one of comprehension rather than production. The choices had to depend solely on participants' comprehension of the verb forms, so both choices had to be grammatically correct, and linguistic cues that could favor one form over the other, such as time adverbials, had to be avoided. It had to be comprehensible to participants.

The instrument used in the study was a set of three worksheets in English, each of which told a brief story in pictures and text. Most of the verbs in the text were presented in both simple past and past progressive forms, with the participant instructed to choose between the forms. I chose this format for several reasons. Visual devices to stimulate study participants' choice or production of verb forms range from very short, such as picture matching with single sentences (Madden & Zwaan, 2003), to longer forms such as narration of silent films (Liskin-Gasparro, 2000). I wanted to use something longer than single sentences so that I could look at discourse features, but not as long as even a few minutes of a film. Researchers studying use of aspect often use text-only cloze passages with adverbials that would cause native speakers to choose "correct" answers; for example, "Right now we (have) a heat wave. The temperature (be) 90°F for three

days” (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992, p. 257). However, I wanted situations where both choices would be grammatically correct, and this argued in favor of pictures and story-telling, and against cloze passages.

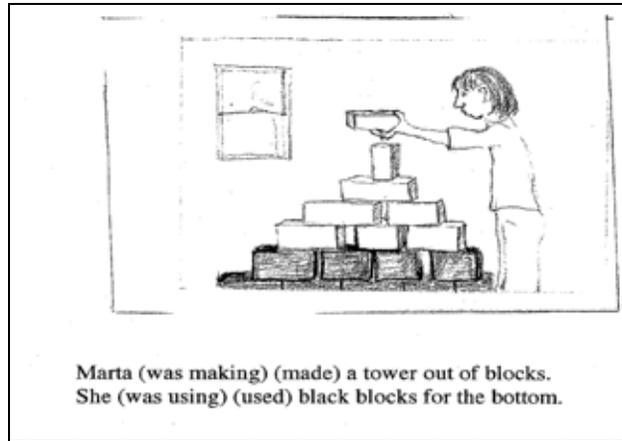
The participants performed three tasks involving the worksheets, to provide the three different sources of data required for a credible research project (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). First, they chose between the verb forms. Next, they completed a stimulated recall in which they were asked the reasons for their choices. Finally, while looking at the pictures for each story without the accompanying text, the participants retold the story in Spanish.

Detailed Description of the Study Instrument

The worksheet task was simple enough for participants to complete without advance training or practice. Each worksheet consisted of a page with four drawings and accompanying text below each drawing. The worksheets are reproduced in Appendices A (text of all worksheets) and B (reproduction of worksheet text and pictures). The text and pictures for each worksheet told a simple story, with places where two verb forms (past progressive and simple past) were shown for the participants to choose between. For example, on Worksheet A, the first frame, reproduced below in Figure 1, was of a girl who had not quite finished building a tower with blocks. The text beneath was “Marta (was building) (built) a tower with blocks. She (was using) (used) black blocks for the bottom,” and the participants had to circle one of the two verb forms in each sentence.

Figure 1

Frame 1, Worksheet A



Description of worksheets

The stories told by Worksheets A and B involved actions in progress versus completed actions, which is, as indicated in Chapter Two, the distinction typically used in describing the difference between simple past and past progressive. Although I wanted participants to use the pictures in making their verb choices, I wanted to make sure they used the text as well. Some of the pictures clearly indicated whether or not the action was completed, but others did not. My intention was that the absence of an obvious choice would lead the participants to more thought, and thus, perhaps, to more interesting explanations.

I had intended to determine to what extent the participant responses to Worksheet B conformed with Bardovi-Harlig's Discourse Hypothesis (1994) as discussed in Chapter

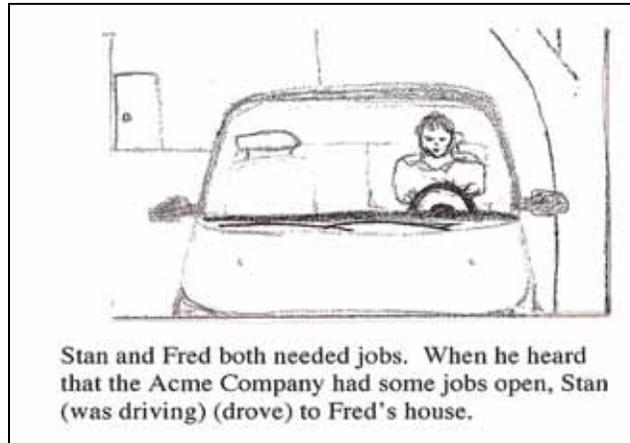
Two. However, I eventually realized that I could not test this because the worksheet was flawed, not having the intended background elements. Appendix C demonstrates this. As a result, this study does not address the Discourse Hypothesis.

All three worksheets allowed participants to make choices based on their perception of whether action was continuing or completed. However, In Worksheet C, I wanted to leave open the possibility of exploring the participants' comprehension of some of the subtler differences in meaning between the simple past and past progressive verb forms that I discussed in Chapter One. For example, the first frame, reproduced below in Figure 2, allowed the participants to indicate presence or absence of causation. The picture shows a man in the driver's seat of a car. The text reads "Stan and Fred both needed jobs. When he heard that the Acme Company had some jobs open, Stan (was driving) (drove) to Fred's house."

By choosing "was driving," a participant with advanced English comprehension could indicate an understanding that Stan heard about the jobs while he was driving. The choice of "drove" could similarly communicate that Stan first heard about the jobs, then drove to Fred's house in response to what he heard; hearing about the jobs caused Stan to drive to Fred's. I did not expect that many (or any) participants would have, let alone be able to articulate, this level of comprehension. However, I did want any such participants to be able to display their knowledge.

Figure 2

Frame 1, Worksheet C



Targeting of Linguistic Variables

The worksheets were designed to focus closely on participants' choice of verb forms. This was done by avoiding the use of adverbials and imposing a task of comprehension rather than production. As discussed in Chapter Two, Klein's (1994) two-state verbs can grammatically and logically be used in either aspect: progressive past before completion and simple past afterwards. For this reason, almost all of the verbs used were two-state.

Research has shown that learners will interpret aspect through verb morphology only when other means (context, time adverbials, and lexicon) do not suffice (Osburne & Mulling, 2001). Accordingly, I used very few time adverbials ("when" and "while" twice each) so participants would have to concentrate on morphology, rather than being cued by other factors.

Finally, I wanted to make sure that participants would not skew their choices toward past progressive because of insecurity about producing irregular past forms such as “built”. By providing both forms, I made the participants’ task one of comprehension, not production. This made it more likely that participant responses would be influenced only by their understanding of aspect.

Considerations for Spanish as L1

As discussed in Chapter Two, there are some situations where a bilingual speaker would always use the Spanish preterite for the English simple past and vice versa, and Spanish imperfect for English past progressive and vice versa. Since I wanted to compare my participants’ worksheet choices to the verb forms in their retells of the stories in Spanish, situations of this type were the only ones used on the worksheets. A bilingual speaker who was also an MA-ESL candidate confirmed that this was the case.

Expected choices

Although both choices for each item were equally grammatical, I expected particular answers on many of the items. For example, on Worksheet A, the pictures clearly indicated whether “make tower,” “use blocks,” and “count blocks” were ongoing or completed actions, and the combination of picture and text for the frame for “tell joke” and “listen to him” were such that it would be logical to choose the same verb form for both.

The question of expected choices was of varying importance in different chapters of the study. I analyzed the participants’ worksheet choices first in isolation, and then in

combination with their interviews, which had two parts: stimulated recall to ask the reasons for their choices, and their retelling of the stories. The extent to which their choices were what I expected was quite important in analyzing the choices by themselves. It was less important in terms of the interviews, but still interesting because then I was concerned with the reason for whichever choice the participants made, and the extent to which they used the analogous form in Spanish in retelling the story.

After I collected the data, I noted that many of the participants' choices were the opposite of what I had anticipated, and this led me to reevaluate the "expected choices" that I used in assessing the responses. To gain useful insights from participants' unexpected choices, it was important for the expected choices to have some validity. It was possible that my familiarity with the worksheets made my own choices differ from what many, or even most, native speakers would choose. Doing an extensive survey of native speakers was out of the scope of this project, but to determine whether my expectations were at least reasonable, I asked three native speakers (NS) to complete the worksheets.

The NS made my expected choices more often than the study participants did, but there were still some differences. They also did not always agree with each other; there were only seven items where all three made the same choice. I revised the expected choices as follows: counting myself as one of four NS, if three or four NS chose the same verb form, the final expected choice was the majority choice. If two NS chose each form, "either" became the expected choice. This process changed the expectation for one item on Worksheet B and three items on Worksheet C. After the revision, 82% of the choices

made by the other three NS (on items where a particular choice was expected) matched the expected choices. As shown in Table 2, which summarizes the expected choices by worksheet, the final expected choices included six items each for past progressive and simple past, four for either, and a pair of items where the same choice was expected for both. My original expected choices, the three NS choices, and the final expected choices are shown in Appendix D.

Table 2

Summary of Expected Choices

Expected choice	Number of Items			Total
	Worksheet A	Worksheet B	Worksheet C	
Past Progressive	2	3	1	6
Simple Past	1	2	3	6
Same form for two items in one worksheet frame	2	0	0	2
Either verb form	2	2	0	4
Total items on worksheet	7	7	4	18

Stimulated recall of choices

Stimulated recall was used to obtain the most immediate explanations from the participants as to their reasons for choosing past progressive or simple past forms on the worksheets. The stimulated recall interviews were administered by a bilingual English/Spanish speaker and conducted in Spanish, the participants' L1, to minimize barriers to communication. The recalls took approximately 20 minutes each. They were conducted individually in a vacant classroom at the agency, and were completed within two hours after the participants completed the worksheets. In the recalls, the participants

took a few minutes to review their worksheets. Then they were asked, for each item, “Why did you give this answer and not the other?” They were encouraged to elaborate on their explanations. The interviewer was instructed to use her judgment to probe without leading or irritating the participants.

The stimulated recalls followed the recommendations of Mackey and Gass (2000) in order to maximize the validity and reliability of the results. They took place directly after the event, and had the strongest possible stimulus (the entire worksheet that had just been completed). The interviewer, who is also pursuing an MA-ESL, was trained by conducting some pilot interviews and then reviewing them with me.

Retells of stories

Finally, the participants were asked to use the pictures alone (using a copy of the worksheet without text) to tell the story in Spanish. This served several purposes. First, it provided evidence of the participant’s comprehension of the story. The retells gave additional information on the participants’ interpretation of the pictures; for example, whether they thought the picture showed a completed or ongoing action. The retells also indicated what aspectual choices the participants would have made if the stories and choices had been in Spanish. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the text of the stories had been designed so that all the verb choices would be parallel in the two languages. Thus, any differences between the verb forms in the retells and those on the worksheets could reflect instances of the participants’ interlanguage.

Each recall/retell session was recorded on audiotape, and then translated from Spanish to English. The recall interviewer did some translations, and a different bilingual MA-ESL candidate did the others. As an independent check of my coding of the participants' reasons and retells, an experienced EFL teacher (also licensed in ESL) listened to the translations of the interviews and did her own coding of the participants' reasons, and the verbs they used in their retells. The few discrepancies between our determinations were reconciled.

Research Participants and Study Location

The study was conducted in ESL classrooms at a major social services agency serving the Chicano and Latino populations in a large metropolitan area in the Midwest. The worksheets were completed and the stimulated recall interviews given during students' regular class time. All the people I dealt with at this agency – the students, tutors, site coordinator and especially the director of the learning program -- were wonderful. I was a volunteer tutor at this agency between November 2002 and December 2004. However, I had not tutored these particular students.

There were eight participants, four women and four men, all L1 Spanish speakers. The specific participants in the study were the students who happened to be in attendance at the applicable classes on the evenings that the interviewer was available. Had the study been conducted on different dates, the participant group could well have been considerably different, because individual students' attendance in this program can be erratic. Table 3 summarizes some information about the group.

Table 3

Characteristics of Study Participants

Participant	Current Age	Age When Left School	Years in US	Years Study of English in Native Country/U.S.	Native Country
1	41-50	25	10	1.5/0.7	Mexico
2	18-30	24	3	1.5/0.2	Argentina
3	31-40	28	0.7	7/0.6	Columbia
4	31-40	24	4	6/2	Mexico
5	31-40	25	3	5/2	Argentina
6	18-30	16	4	3/0.7	Mexico
7	18-30	17	3	3.5/1.8	Mexico
8	18-30	14	3	3/0.5	Mexico

All participants had recently received scores of 66 or greater on the Literary Skills section of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics. In the textbook series used by the agency, past progressive and simple past had been introduced at a previous level, and were reviewed at the participants' current level. (Veramendi, Grognet & Crandall, 2002). These participants were at the same level as those whom I had tutored, and whose difficulty with aspect in past tense had prompted me to choose this research topic in the first place.

Five of the participants came from Mexico, two from Argentina, and one from Colombia. Six of the eight participants had been in the U.S. for 3 to 4 years, one had arrived less than one year before and the oldest participant had been in the U.S. for 10 years.

Three participants, all currently between ages 18 and 30, reported leaving school between ages 14 and 17 and arriving in the U.S. between 3 and 4 years ago. They had studied English for 3 to 3.5 years in their home countries, and for 0.5 to 1.8 years in the U.S.

The other five participants left school between ages 24 and 28. I was surprised to find students in this program with so much formal education. Three of them were between ages 31 and 40, and they each had seven or eight total years of English classes: around six years before coming to the U.S. and up to two years afterwards. The remaining two had little formal English instruction – about 1.5 years in their home countries and less than one year in the U.S.

Students were asked to participate in the study by having the announcement in Appendix E read to them in English by the tutor for their class, one week before they would be participating. At that time, they were given a copy of the consent document, included in Appendix F, in both Spanish and English, to read at their leisure during the following week. The day of the study, the bilingual speaker who conducted the interviews answered questions and obtained the signed consent forms.

Data Compilation Procedure

I transcribed the interviews for each participant (as translated into English) virtually word-for-word. There were two transcriptions for each participant, one for the reasons for the choices, and one for the story retells. On the first transcription, I included a column summarizing the reason the participant gave. Most of the reasons fell into a few categories: OA (ongoing action), CA (completed action), FG (foreground), BG (background), Span (chose what they would have used in Spanish), and NR (no reason). Figure 3 shows an excerpt from the transcription for Participant 7.

Figure 3

Excerpt, Transcription I: Reasons for Worksheet Choices for Participant 7

Worksheet Verb	Worksheet Choice	Explanation of Reasons for Worksheet Choices	Reason Code
Drive to Fred's	SP	Both need jobs, saw a place that was looking for workers. Drove to the house because drove is more like a fact; he did it.	CA

SP Simple Past

CA Completed action

In transcribing the translated retells, I put each clause on a new line, and coded the verb as PP or SP (past progressive or simple past). At the left side of the transcription, I put the worksheet verbs and choices next to the final time they were used in the retells, if at all. I used the final verb form to compare with the worksheet choice. Figure 4 shows the portion of Participant 7's retell corresponding to the portion of the interview transcribed in Figure 1.

Figure 4

Excerpt, Transcription II: Retell of Worksheet Stories for Participant 7

Worksheet Verb	Worksheet Choice	Transcription of Retell	Verb Form in Retell
Drive to Fred's	SP	drove to Fred's house went to get him	SP

SP simple past

Between the original worksheet choices, the reasons for the choices given in the recalls, and the story retellings, the study produced three sources of data. The worksheet choices could be compared with the expected choices. The reasons given could be compared with the worksheets for consistency, and might be a way to understand participants' interlanguage. The retells could verify the participants' overall comprehension of the worksheets, and discrepancies between the verb forms in the retells and those chosen on the worksheets could show specific situations where the participants did not understand the use of the verb forms.

Hypotheses

My hypotheses were as follows:

- That a comparison of the participants' worksheet choices with the expected choices would indicate that the group as a whole and most individuals had some knowledge but not mastery of the past progressive and simple past verb forms. This would be evidenced in two ways: first, that the participants would make the expected choices more often than randomly (i.e., more than 50% of the time) but

less than perfectly; and second, that they would follow the PAH by overusing past progressive for lexically durative verbs;

- That participants would explain many of their worksheet choices in terms of ongoing or completed action (indicating understanding of the verb forms), but that they would give other reasons as well. Because non-native choices of verb forms could result from a flawed understanding of the forms, there would be a greater variety of explanations on items where the choices did not match expected native speaker responses, and the explanations would give insight into the participants' interlanguage; and
- That most verb forms on participants' retells would correspond to their worksheet choices but some would not, especially on items where their choices did not match expected native speaker responses or where they gave unusual explanations for their choices. These could indicate situations where the participants did not comprehend past progressive and simple past forms well enough to make the same distinctions in English that they were able to make in L1.

This chapter presented my research question and methods. It included the rationale for modifying one of the data assessment tools after an initial review of the data. It also described the participants and location of the study. After a description of the data compilation techniques, it ended with my hypotheses as to the results of the study. The next chapter presents and discusses the study results.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study is an effort toward answering my research question: What can one learn about the interlanguage of Spanish-Speaking ELLs in an ABE program from their choices between simple past and past progressive verb forms, their explanations of their choices, and their corresponding choices of verb forms in L1?" This chapter begins with a summary of the data collection procedure (a full description of which is in Chapter Three) and a statement of four sub-questions of my research question. I then present the study results pertaining to each of these sub-questions for the participant group as a whole. Following this, I revisit the results for each of the eight participants individually. Finally, I discuss the results in terms of the hypotheses presented in Chapter Three and connect them to the literature review of Chapter Two.

To gather data, I created worksheets that forced participants to choose between the two verb forms, and then asked them the reasons for their choices. In the study, each participant completed the same three worksheets, each with a simple story told in four pictures and accompanying text. The texts included sentences such as "Marta (was making) (made) a tower out of blocks." The participants completed the worksheets by circling their choices. They generally completed the three worksheets within fifteen minutes.

Within an hour after completing the worksheets, the participants were interviewed in their L1, Spanish. For each worksheet, they were first asked the reasons for their

choices and then – presented with that worksheet’s pictures only, without text – asked to retell the story in Spanish. The retell indicated whether they comprehended the story, and permitted comparison of the verb forms they used in the Spanish retell with their worksheet choices. This sequence (giving reasons for choices, then retelling the story) was repeated for each worksheet. The interviews generally took about 20 minutes, including a few minutes for the participants to provide the demographic information summarized in Table 3 in the previous chapter. This procedure produced three types of data: participants’ worksheet choices, the reasons they gave for their choices, and their retellings of the stories.

Overview of Analysis

I summarize and analyze the results first for the group of participants as a whole in terms of four sub-questions of my research question. I then revisit the fourth question for each participant individually. The questions are:

(1) What did the participants’ choice of verb forms indicate about their preference for one form over the other, their comprehension of the forms, and the extent to which they followed the Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis (PAH)? I addressed this question first by comparing the participants’ worksheet choices with a set of “expected” choices based on those of three native speakers and my own expectations, as discussed in Chapter Three. Overall, the participants made the expected choices about $2/3$ of the time. I also examined the extent to which they used or overused progressive forms for lexically durative verbs.

(2) What could be learned about participants' interlanguage from the reasons they gave for their choices? As discussed in the previous chapter, I designed the worksheets primarily to depict situations where actions were ongoing/completed, and 63% of the time, that was the reason the participants gave for their choices. However, most participants gave other reasons as well, including some I categorized as invented rules.

(3) What information could be obtained from the relationships between the verb forms used in story retells and the verb forms chosen on the worksheets? There was substantial agreement in aspect between participants' worksheets and their retells of the stories. However, three participants had some retell discrepancies on items where they had invented rules, and the combination helped me better understand their interlanguage.

(4) How did information about the participants' formal education, years of English language study, and time in the United States, combined with the results from the three data sources, provide additional insight into the participants' interlanguage?

Worksheet Choices

In the study, the participants were given three worksheets, each with a simple story told in four pictures and accompanying text. To complete the worksheets, the participants had to make a total of 18 choices between simple past and past progressive verb forms. The text of each worksheet is given in Appendix A, and the worksheets themselves are reproduced in Appendix B. Appendix G displays all the verb form choices, by item and participant.

I wanted to draw inferences only on items that participants understood. If it

appeared from the interview (both to me and to an experienced EFL teacher) that a participant misunderstood an essential part of the text, I excluded the associated verb form choice from the analysis. An example would be “José tell joke” where the participant did not know what “joke” meant. If the interview (either the explanation of reasons or the retell) indicated a misunderstanding or misremembering of a minor detail unlikely to affect the choice of verb form, I included the verb choice in the analysis. For example, two participants interpreted “Marta laugh so much that she fell on the tower” as “Marta laugh because she fell on the tower.” Whether Marta laughed/was laughing because she fell, or vice versa, the situation type of “laugh” (activity) was unchanged and the choice of verb form probably not affected. Nine items were excluded from the analysis – one each for Participants 3, 5, 6 and 7, and five for Participant 8.

Overall, the participants chose past progressive forms only slightly more often than simple past forms, with 53% of all choices being past progressive. However, individual participants varied widely as to their preference. Individual participants chose past progressive between 4 and 15 times, and simple past between 3 and 12 times.

I did not design the study with the idea of differentiating between regular and irregular verbs, but did tally the participants’ choices separately for each. Unlike the participants in Bailey’s study (1989) (which, it should be noted, was a production rather than comprehension study), these participants did not show a preference for past progressive with regular and simple past with irregular verbs. They chose past progressive 53% of the time for the irregular verbs and 54% of the time for the regular verbs – virtually no difference. The only participant who made any mention of irregular

verbs in his interview chose past progressive for identical percentages of both regular and irregular verbs.

Either response to any item was grammatical. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, most of the items had an “expected” choice, based on the choices of three native speakers and my own expectations. (This was a proxy for native speaker competence, which was admittedly imperfect, since the native speakers themselves made the expected choices only 82% of the time.) As a group, the participants made the expected choices 68% of the time, which is an indication that most of them seemed to understand how native speakers use the verb forms. (Had they chosen randomly, half their choices would have been expected and half unexpected.) Individual participants varied in the extent to which they made expected choices, from one participant at 85% and one at 83% at the high end, to two participants at 50% at the low end.

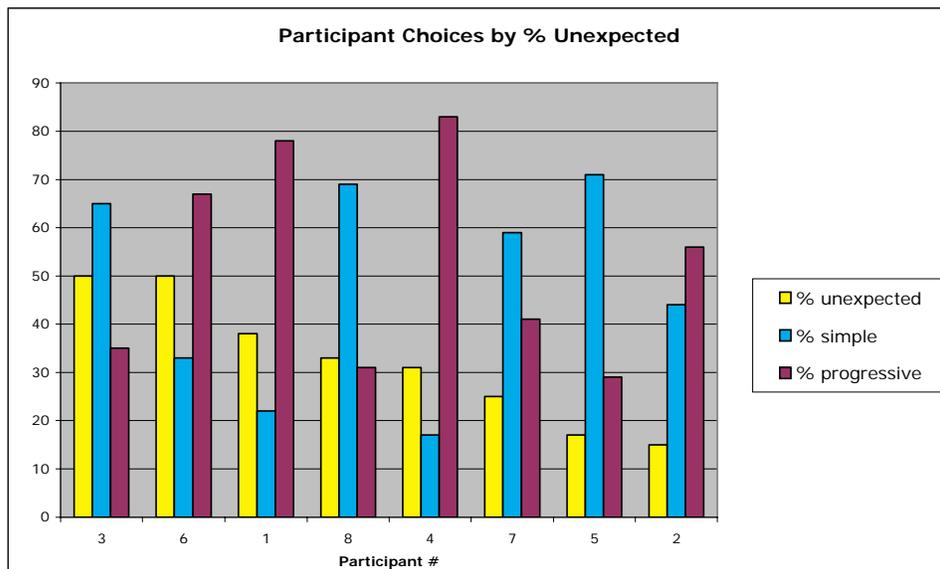
Of the items with expected choices, all but one involved accomplishment verbs. (For the one achievement verb, all participants but one made the expected choice of the simple form.) Since, in accordance with the PAH, adults learning a second language tend to start out by overusing progressive forms for lexically durative verbs (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992), one might expect to find that the participants who chose past progressive more often than the group as a whole also made more unexpected choices than average. This was the case for some participants but not others. The four participants who preferred past progressive ranked tied-for-first, third, fifth and eighth in terms of those with the greatest percentage of unexpected choices. This is illustrated in Figure 5, which shows the percentage of each participant’s simple and progressive choices, sorted by the

percentage of unexpected choices.

One might also have expected that participants who had studied English longer would have made fewer unexpected choices, but there was no correlation. The Pearson's coefficient was 0.06.

Figure 5

Participant Choices by Percent Unexpected



There was no particular pattern to the expected choices. On every worksheet item where there was an expected choice, at least half the participants made that choice. At the same time, on every item at least one participant made the unexpected choice, and there were several items on which three or four participants made the unexpected choice.

Worksheet C, which had a more complex story, evoked a somewhat higher percentage of

unexpected choices – 36% compared with 32% overall – which makes sense. The lack of overall pattern in the unexpected choices could result from chance, or possibly from the varied backgrounds of the participants. Table 4 summarizes the unexpected choices by expected verb form and worksheet.

Table 4

*Expected and Unexpected Participant Choices by Worksheet
On Items Where a Particular Choice Was Expected*

	Worksheet A	Worksheet B	Worksheet C	Total
Expected choice: Progressive				
Expected choices	12	17	3	32 – 71%
Unexpected choices	4	6	3	13 – 29%
Expected choice: Simple				
Expected choices	5	8	15	28 – 65%
Unexpected choices	3	5	7	15 – 35%
Expected choice: Same form for both items in the frame				
Expected choices	4	0	0	4 – 67%
Unexpected choices	2	0	0	2 – 33%
Total expected choices	21 70%	25 69%	18 64%	64 68%
Total unexpected choices	9 30%	11 31%	10 36%	30 32%

Reasons for Choices

I asked the participants the reasons for their choices because I wanted insight into their comprehension of past progressive and simple past in English. Table 5 tallies the various reasons the participants gave, and Figure 6 provides the reasons by participant in

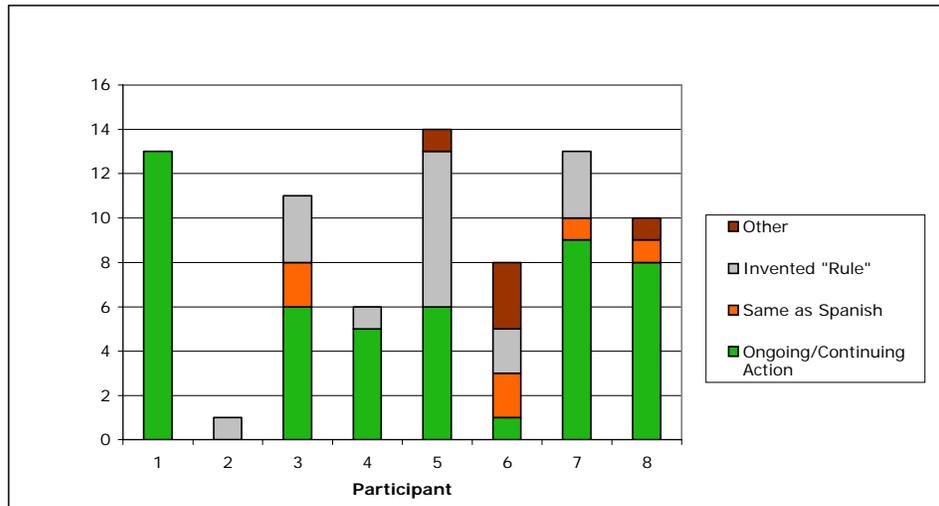
graphic form. Appendix H shows the reasons by item for each participant.

Table 5

Summary of Participants' Reasons for Verb Form

Reason for choice	Number of times this reason was cited	Number of participants who gave this reason at least once
Ongoing or completed action	48	7
Language transfer: used English for what would have been chosen in Spanish	6	4
Various explanations and invented "rules"	18	6
Action did not have accompanying picture	2	2
Easier to use past progressive than to learn irregular form for simple past	3	1
Total specified reasons	77	8
Reason unspecified – no reason given (7 participants); participant just translated the text, with the chosen verb form, into Spanish (7 participants); or the choice "sounded right" (one participant, 17 times)	50	8

Figure 6

Participants' Reasons for Choices

As indicated in Table 5, the most common reason given was that the worksheet text and/or pictures indicated that the action was in progress or had been completed. Another common reason was that the participant decided what the choice would be in L1, and then chose the L2 equivalent, which was similar to the behavior that Chan (2004) reported.

What do the reasons the participants gave indicate about their interlanguage? First, one should note that of the 77 reasons given, over half (41) reflect a situation where the participant chose the expected verb form, and did so because of a judgment of ongoing or completed action. This is what one would expect of native speakers, so as a

group, these participants were already well along on the path toward native-like understanding of the verb forms. Of course, there was great individual variation. Two of the participants had no responses in this category, while another participant had 11 such responses.

As further evidence that the participants understood the verb forms, five of the participants explained one or two of their *unexpected* choices in terms of ongoing or completed action. Three of the seven instances occurred on items 1 and 2 of Worksheet A, items for which the native speakers were not unanimous in their choice of form. The participants could have differed in their interpretation of whether the action was in fact completed, just as the native speakers did.

As was Liskin-Gasparro's (2000) experience, there were several examples of "rules" the participants had invented. I applied this designation to any choice that was made because a participant seemed to think, incorrectly, that the rules of English grammar, combined with something in the text, required that choice. For example, some participants thought that any sentence including "while" had to have both verbs in the past progressive form. This is not the case in Spanish (Repaso, 1997), so such a reason was strictly a misunderstanding of the rules of English. Similarly, one participant chose past progressive for "read a letter" because the reading was "to someone" rather than "to himself." I describe most of these invented rules later in this chapter, in the discussion of individual participant results.

All the text in the worksheets was reflected in the pictures, with one exception. As discussed in Chapter Three, there was no picture associated with "make appointment"

on Worksheet B because I wanted to know what choices the participants would make in the absence of a picture. Two participants said that the lack of a picture indicated that the action was finished. Three others cited invented rules, and three gave no reasons.

I had expected a greater range of reasons for the unexpected than for the expected choices, but most of the “invented rule” responses, (12 out of 18, or 67%) like most of the responses overall, were on items where participants made the expected choice. Table 6 summarizes the reasons that each participant gave for their expected and unexpected choices of verb form.

Table 6

Reasons for Expected and Unexpected Worksheet Choices

Reason	Participant								Tot
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
<i>Reasons for expected choices</i>									
Ongoing or completed action	11		4	5	6		8	7	41
Spanish						2	1		3
Invented rule		1	3		5	1	2		12
Other					1	3			4
<i>Reasons for unexpected choices</i>									
Ongoing or completed action	2		2			1	1	1	7
Spanish			2					1	3
Invented rule			1	1	2	1	1		6
Other								1	1
<i>Total Reasons</i>									
Ongoing or completed action	13		6	5	6	1	9	8	48
Spanish			2			2	1	1	6
Invented rule		1	4	1	7	2	3		18
Other					1	3		1	5

Spanish Participant used English for what would have been chosen in Spanish
 Invented rule Participant based choice on an invented “rule” about English

Although they did not give reasons for all their verb choices, most of the participants did provide interesting insights into their interlanguage through their responses.

Retells of Worksheet Stories

I asked the participants to retell the worksheet stories so that I could compare the verb forms they used in L1 with the ones they had chosen in English on their worksheets, and also so that I could assess their comprehension of the stories.

The participants had made a total of 133 verb choices on the worksheets, excluding comprehension errors. Of those choices, 90 had usable, corresponding verbs in the retells. There were various reasons for the decrease. Many participants omitted parts of the stories and so used fewer verbs. Participants 3 and 6 were not interviewed on Worksheet C. In addition, five items had to be discarded because of interviewer error: in most cases the interviewer, as instructed, asked the participant to “tell the story.” However, in some cases she asked “What is/was happening here?” Because this question used a progressive verb form and thus could influence the aspect of the response, I disregarded any retell verbs in past progressive form that followed such a biased prompt. This resulted in one and four disregarded responses for Participants 1 and 3, respectively.

Of the verbs in the retells that corresponded to verbs on the worksheets, 62, or 69%, were in the same aspect in both the retells and the worksheets. In other words, most of the time, the participants made the same choice of aspect on the worksheets as they did when telling the stories in their L1. As with other study results, this indicates that the

group as a whole had a good understanding of the verb forms.

Of the aspect changes, most were from simple past on the worksheets to past progressive or present progressive in the retells. Only 8 of the 28 changes were from past progressive to simple past. I have no theory as to why this imbalance occurred. Table 7 summarizes these results, while Appendix I details the aspect of the retell verbs, by item and participant, with the corresponding worksheet verbs for comparison.

Table 7

Comparison of Verb Aspect on Worksheets versus in Retells

Tense/aspect change from worksheet to retell	Number of instances
No change in aspect	
Progressive to progressive	43
Simple to simple	19
Total	62
Aspect change	
Progressive to simple	8
Simple to progressive	20
Total	28
No corresponding verb in retell	
Progressive on worksheet	20
Simple on worksheet	23
Total	43

All participants switched from the past tense of the worksheet text to present tense in their retells to some extent, and four of them retold large portions or entire stories in present tense. Participants often use present tense when they verbalize stories told in pictures (Von Stutterheim & Klein, 1989) or perform film retell tasks (Liskin-Gasparro,

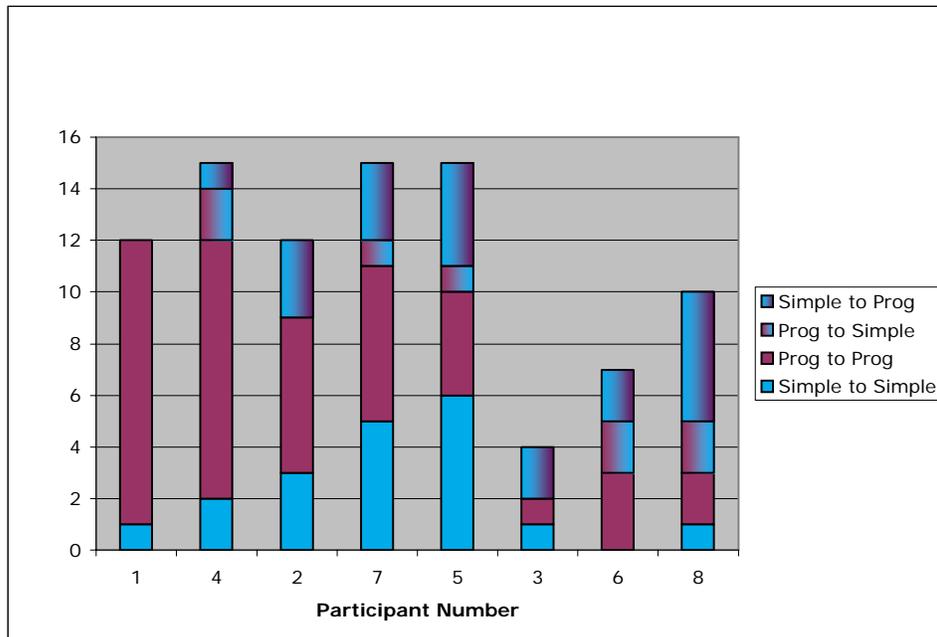
2000; Salaberry, 1999). In the present study, the present tense form used was almost always the Spanish equivalent of present progressive rather than simple present. I do not know if this relates specifically to Spanish; in the Von Stutterheim and Klein study (1989) the present tense narratives in German used both simple and progressive forms when translated into English. In any case, for all but two participants in the present study, their use of present progressives was only a tense shift, not also an aspect shift. For the purposes of this research, I decided to count present tense retells as matches if the aspect matched.

Of the 14 verb form choices for which an invented “rule” was cited and for which participants supplied a verb in the retell, seven had the same form for the retell as for the worksheet, and seven did not. This indicates that some participants’ misunderstanding of when to use the verb forms in English did not always cause them to choose a different form in English than they would use in L1.

Individual participants used between 0 and 7 verb forms that were different in the retells. Figure 7 shows the results by participant. The participants are sorted by the percentage of retell verbs that matched the worksheet choices. Participants 1, 2 and 4 had numerous matches between worksheet and retell, while Participant 8 had very few matches. In the section on individual results, which follows, these results are combined with the other data to present a fuller picture.

Figure 7

Comparison of Aspect from Worksheet to Retell Sorted by Percent of Aspect Matches



Results by Participant

This section draws on all the results for each participant individually to reach conclusions about his or her interlanguage.

Participant 1 left school at age 25 and had studied English for a total of 2.2 years. He was the oldest participant (the only one in the 41-50 age range) and the one who had been in the U.S. the longest – 10 years. Fourteen of his eighteen worksheet choices were progressive, the second most of any participant. On items where (based on native speaker choices) one form was expected, 38% of his choices were unexpected,

which was the 3rd-highest percentage. In his interview, he gave reasons for all but two items, and in every case, his reason was that the action was either ongoing or completed. He indicated that he saw most of the worksheet actions as continuing unless it was clear they had been completed. All twelve verb forms on his retells matched his worksheet choices.

Thus, although his many progressive choices produced more unexpected choices than average, they seem to have resulted from his having genuinely viewed more situations as continuing than the native speakers did, rather than from a misunderstanding of the verb forms. Although he had studied English for a relatively short period of time, all three sources of data indicate that he had good comprehension of the verb forms. This may have been the result of long exposure to informal English from living in the U.S.

Participant 2 left school at age 24, studied English for a total of 1.7 years (the least for the group), was under age 30, and had been in the U.S. for three years. Ten of her eighteen worksheet choices were progressive, and she made only two unexpected choices. She did not give any reason other than “it sounded right,” except for one item. This vague explanation is similar to the “just a feeling” responses given by some of the participants in Collins’s 2005 study. Participant 2 gave one invented rule – she chose past progressive for “do something” in Worksheet C because the sentence started with “while.” Unfortunately, there was no corresponding verb on her retell. Out of twelve verbs in her retell, all but three (all progressive in retell and none on unexpected choices) matched the aspect on her worksheets.

Like Participant 1, she seemed to have a good grasp of the verb forms despite a

relatively short period of formal English study. I have no information on her informal exposure to English, but it is possible that her inability to give reasons for her choices other than “it sounds right” resulted from her having (using Krashen’s terms) *acquired* rather than *learned* these verb forms (Krashen 1981, 1982).

Participant 3 had received the most formal schooling of the participants, having left school at age 28. She also had the shortest time in the U.S. – 8 months. She was in her 30’s, and had studied English for 7 years before coming here. Six of her 17 usable choices were progressive. She made six unexpected choices, the most of any participant.

She cited ongoing/continuing action as the reason for six of her choices. On the first item, “build a tower,” she chose past progressive, and said “...there’s an action there. Was to be doing something, at the moment...” For the next item, “use blocks,” she chose simple past, and said “not quite like an action. Something that I used at that moment, in the past.”

On four items for which she chose simple past, I classified her reasons as invented rules. Regarding “listen to him,” she said: “Here I was confused. Listen is also like doing an action, to listen, to speak, to say also. But in truth I really don’t know.” On the next item, “laugh,” she said, “‘Was’ is like I am something or there is something. I can’t say ‘I am’ or ‘I was’ laughing. Like, ‘I laughed.’ It doesn’t say ‘I was laughing.’ It’s ‘I laughed.’ I relate it more to Spanish.” She gave the same reason for choosing simple past for “add flour.” Comparing her comments on these items with her comments for “build tower” and “use blocks,” it was as if for the two verbs, “laughing” and “adding,” she thought that “was” could only be a copula, not an auxiliary. I did not understand her rule

for “make appointment,” which was “There has to be something, do something about something. I’m not making an appointment. One makes an appointment with a doctor, not was doing from something that can be placed.”

Unfortunately, four of her retell verbs on Worksheet A had to be disregarded because of the interviewer’s faulty prompt, and she was not interviewed on Worksheet C, so not much could be learned from her retell.

Her rambling explanations for her choices and high number of unexpected choices seem to indicate less understanding of the verb forms than most of the other participants had. This could be related to her short time of exposure to English in the U.S. compared to the other participants. On the other hand, since she did have many years of formal instruction in English, she may have been overanalyzing the questions.

Participant 4, who was in his 30’s, left school at age 24 and had studied English for eight years, two in the U.S. He chose past progressive 15 out of 18 times, more than any other participant. He made four unexpected choices, all past progressive. When asked the reasons for his choices, he usually (12 times) responded only by translating his worksheet choice directly into Spanish, but he did cite ongoing/continuing action five times. He cited one invented rule, for choosing “was making an appointment” (the unexpected choice.) He said, “While takes imperfect, that’s the clue,” but then used the same form when retelling the story. Like Participant 2, he had 15 verbs in his retell and only three mismatches, none of which were on unexpected choices. His results indicate a good understanding of the verb forms, which is consistent with his extensive formal education and study of English.

Participant 5, also in her 30's, left school at age 25 and had studied English for seven years, two in the U.S. She chose simple past twelve times out of seventeen, the most of any participant. She had only two unexpected choices, both simple past on the worksheet but progressive on the retell. On retell, ten verbs matched the form on her worksheets, but five did not – the second highest of the group.

She was quite voluble during the interview when asked the reasons for her choices, and gave several invented rules, some of which applied to both of her unexpected choices and three of her five retell mismatches. Table 8 details part of her interview for Worksheet A.

On Worksheet B, she chose “read a letter” because she said “was reading” required a second verb. She chose “made an appointment” because there was no picture, no one doing anything “right now,” so the action must be finished. In her retell of worksheet B, all but the last verb was present tense, mostly progressive but including “she makes a doctor’s appointment” which was consistent with her aspect choice for that verb on the worksheet.

Although this participant had considerable formal and English-language education and made only a few unexpected choices, the combination of several invented rules and many mismatches on the retell suggests that she was still somewhat confused about the verb forms.

Table 8

Participant 5's Responses for Worksheet A (partial)

	Item 1	Item 2
Worksheet A, Frame 1	Marta [make] a tower out of blocks	She [use] black blocks for the bottom
Worksheet choice	<i>made</i>	<i>used</i>
Worksheet reason (translated from Spanish)	“ <i>Was making</i> needs another action in the sentence”	“ <i>Used</i> needs to be part of another action too. As an individual verb, it needs preterite”
	Participant then says she wants to change worksheet choices because “the action is taking place right now.”	
Retell (translated from Spanish)	Marta <i>was making</i> the tower (did not match worksheet)	Marta <i>chose</i> black blocks (matched worksheet)
	Item 3	Item 4
Worksheet A, Frame 2	Marta [count] the blocks	when José [walk] to the tower
Worksheet choice	<i>was counting</i>	<i>was walking</i>
Worksheet reason (translated from Spanish)	Same logic as before; two verbs in the sentence. Not sure if action terminated. <i>While</i> [sic] indicates simultaneous.	
Retell (translated from Spanish)	While Marta <i>was counting</i> (matched worksheet)	José <i>interrupted</i> the action and <i>entered walking</i> (did not match worksheet)

Participant 6, who was in the youngest (18-30) age group, left school at age 16, studied English for 4.4 years and had been in the U.S. for 3 years. Ten of his 15 usable choices were progressive, and of his ten choices on items where there was an expected choices, he made five unexpected choices, so he tied with Participant 3 in having the

highest percentage of unexpected choices.

This high percentage could have been a consequence of his unique perspective on the verb forms. He said he did not make a distinction between a continuing action and one finished in the past; he just always used “was [verb+ing]” for the past, because it was easier. That way, he did not have to learn to conjugate “all these verbs in the past tense, irregular verbs.” Despite this statement, he said he chose simple past for “read a letter.” because he recognized the conjugation for that verb. He also chose simple past for the next two items on Worksheet B, but did not explain why. It is unfortunate that he was not interviewed on Worksheet C, because he chose simple past for the last two items. I really wish we had his reasons for this!

As I indicated in Chapter Three, I thought some participants might overuse past progressive rather than simple past if they were required to *produce* the irregular verb form. That is why I provided both verb forms and only asked for a choice between them. However, even that precaution apparently was not enough to consistently overcome this participant’s bias against simple past. As a result the data he provided was insufficient to provide much insight into his understanding of the verb forms or the nature of his interlanguage.

Participant 7, also in the youngest age group, had left school at age 17, studied English for 5.3 years and been in the U.S. for 3.5 years. On his worksheet, he chose simple past ten out of 17 times (the second-highest of the participants), and made the expected choices all but three times. He cited ongoing/continuing action for nine of his choices, the second-highest of the group. His recall of the text was above average; on

retell, he used 15 of the worksheet verbs, 11 times with the same aspect as on his worksheet. One of his mismatches was on an unexpected choice, and another was where he provided an invented rule.

I classified his reasons on three items as “invented rules.” He chose “was reading a letter” (the expected choice) on Worksheet B. He said that [simple past] would be for reading only to himself, and [past progressive] would be for reading to someone. In the actual text, Grandpa’s letter was “from Sue.” However, in the retell the participant said Grandpa was reading “to Sue,” so his choice of past progressive was consistent with his understanding. He chose simple past for “bake in oven” and “make appointment” because he wanted the verbs to agree. The exact translation of his reasoning was, “Meanwhile, the cake was baking. Both could be used. I guided myself with the next one. I didn’t want to write ‘was baking and mother was making.’ [Interviewer: Agreement?] Yes, so I left it like that. [Mother] made [the appointment], but could be either. Meanwhile the cake was baking.” Interestingly, the translation of his retell was, “and then while the cake was baking the mother made an appointment with the doctor” so he did not feel that the verbs had to agree in Spanish.

The study results indicate that Participant 7 has a good understanding of the verb forms, but is somewhat confused on a few points. It is possible that his relative lack of formal education caused him to misunderstand some of what he was taught in English classes about these verb forms.

Participant 8 was the least educated of the participants, having left school at age 14 and studied English for only 3.5 years, barely longer than the 3 years she had been in

the United States. She was in the 18-30 age group, and had five comprehension errors, more than the rest of the participants combined. Only 4 of her 13 usable worksheet choices were past progressive, the lowest of the group, but she had an average percentage of unexpected choices – 33%.

She obviously understood that the difference between the verb forms related to whether action was ongoing or continuing, because she cited that reason 12 times (including four times on items that were excluded from the group analysis because of comprehension errors). However, in many cases, her worksheet choice was the opposite of what she said in the interview. For example, for “do something” on Worksheet C she chose past progressive, and gave as her reason, “I picked “was doing” because he already did it.” For “accept job”, her reason for choosing simple past was “She [sic] at that moment is accepting, because it's the action.” Her retell was confusing, in that she frequently used the preterite progressive form in Spanish, which is used for actions that were in progress but then stopped. However, she would then elaborate that the action was continuing; for example,

Participant: He is driving, was driving [preterite progressive form] at the moment that he was driving to a friend's house.

Interviewer: Completed or continuing?

Participant: Oh, no, it continued. (Worksheet C)

Even with her confusing use of preterite progressive, her retell provided further evidence that she had confused the two verb forms – out of ten verbs, only three matched the aspect she chose on her worksheet. Taken together, the results indicate that this

participant had somehow misunderstood what she had been taught about the verb forms, and reversed them in her mind.

Discussion

Worksheet choices

My hypothesis was that participants' worksheet choices, when compared to native speaker choices, would indicate that they had some knowledge but not mastery of the difference between past progressive and simple past. Overall, the participants made expected choices about 2/3 of the time, and this finding confirms my hypothesis. That percentage of unexpected choices is significantly more than random. Had the participants' choices been random, the probability that they would have made the unexpected choice only 30 times (out of the 94 items where there was such a choice) is less than 0.1%, according to the cumulative binomial probability function in Excel (Microsoft Corporation, 2001). However, it should be noted that two of the participants did make unexpected choices 50% of the time, so, strictly speaking, my hypothesis was confirmed for only six of the eight participants.

Reasons for worksheet choices

The main goal of this research was to find out what my participants thought was the difference between past progressive and simple past. I expected that these explanations would give insight into their interlanguage, *i.e.* their developing understanding of these verb forms, and this was the case. In many cases, the participants explained their choices in terms of ongoing or continuing action, which is the explanation

one would anticipate from a native speaker. At the same time, almost all the participants explained at least some of their choices in ways that speakers of English who had mastered these forms would not. Of the 76 items for which reasons were given, 28 were of this sort. Contrary to my hypothesis, the unusual reasons (those other than ongoing or completed action) were not disproportionately associated with unexpected choices. In all, 28% of the expected choices (18/64) and 33% of the unexpected choices (10/30) had unusual reasons.

Retells of worksheet stories

As I expected, there was substantial agreement in aspect between participants' worksheets and their retells of the stories. I had also expected that matches or discrepancies between the verb forms the participants chose on their worksheets and the forms they used when they retold the stories in Spanish would provide additional information as to their understanding of the verb forms, or lack thereof. This did occur. For Participants 1, 2 and 4, the fact that their retells substantially matched their worksheet choices reinforced my impression from their worksheet choices and explanations that they had a good understanding of the verb forms. Participants 5 and 7 had some retell discrepancies on items where they had invented rules, and this combination of information helped me better understand their interlanguage. For Participant 8, the fact that both her retell and the reasons she gave for her worksheet choices were inconsistent with those choices made it clear that she had gotten the two forms reversed. However, my hypothesis that the discrepancies would occur disproportionately on items with unexpected choices or unusual reasons for the choices did not prove to be the case.

Connections with the Literature Review

How do the results of this study relate to with those of other studies? One can look at morphological, lexical, and instructional considerations.

The overall finding was that most of the participants' verb choices matched those of the small random group of native speakers who completed the worksheets, and that they explained their choices in terms of completed or ongoing action. This indicated that they were developing a native-like understanding of the verb forms. However, this small study, unlike the longitudinal or larger snapshot studies in the literature, showed no statistical correlation between increasing study of English and increasing morphological accuracy of use of the past tense forms. In fact, some participants appeared to provide support for Krashen's (1981, 1982) view that acquisition is more efficacious than formal language learning. The participants did not exhibit the tendency noticed by Bailey (1989) to use simple past with irregular verbs. As in Chan's (2004) study, four participants stated that they sometimes made their verb choices by first thinking in L1 and then translated the result to L2. This language transfer strategy resulted in native-like verb choices for two of the participants, but the opposite for the other two.

I looked for a relationship between my results and the Primacy of Aspect hypothesis. Most of the verbs in the study were accomplishment verbs, and PAH predicts that learners of second (as well as first) languages will be slower to associate accomplishment verbs with past progressive than with simple past. The participants as a group showed somewhat of a preference (56%) for progressive past on the

accomplishment verbs. This could indicate that they relatively far along in their process of learning these forms, compared to participants in other studies. However, there was no correlation between years of English study and preference for either of the verb forms. In fact, the participant who most preferred past progressive had studied English only two years, while one of the participants with the longest study of English had the greatest preference for simple past.

As in Liskin-Gasparro's (2000) and Collins's (2005) studies, most of the participants explained at least some of their choices as resulting from an erroneous "rule" they claimed to remember from instruction. In particular, several participants indicated they were taught to use the same form (generally past progressive) for both verbs in sentences with "while." The finding that they did not do so in their Spanish retells of the same sentences provides evidence that this was an instructional effect.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the study results pertaining to the participants' verb choices on the worksheets, their reasons for those choices, and the connections between the verb form choices on the worksheets and those the participants used in retelling the worksheet stories in L1. These results were analyzed in terms of the hypotheses outlined in Chapter Three. As I hypothesized, the participants' preponderance of expected (*i.e.* native-speaker) choices showed that they had knowledge but not mastery of the verb forms; they typically explained their choices in terms of continuing or completed action but gave other, more unusual reasons as well; and the verb forms they used for retelling

the stories usually matched the forms they chose on the worksheets. However, contrary to my hypotheses, the unusual reasons did not correlate with unexpected choices, and discrepancies between worksheet choices and retell verb forms didn't correlate with unexpected choices or unusual reasons.

I also connected my results to the literature review of Chapter Two. Key findings were that, contrary to other studies, I found no statistical correlation between increasing study of English and increasing morphological accuracy of use of the past tense forms. Also, my data did not support the PAH in that there was no correlation between years of English study and preference for the progressive aspect for achievement verbs. However, like Liskin-Gasparro (2000) and Collins (2005), I found that participants explained some choices of verb forms as resulting from misremembered or misunderstood instruction. In the next chapter, I discuss some implications of this research, its limitations, and potential avenues for further study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The process of doing this study and the results it produced taught me a great deal. This chapter provides my major insights, indicates where this study fits in with the literature review of Chapter Two, presents teaching implications based on the results, points out limitations of the study, suggests directions for future research, and tells how I plan to communicate and use the results.

Major Insights

English language learners in ABE programs learn about grammar from a variety of sources. By the time the participants in this study reached the high intermediate classes at the agency where the study took place, it is likely that they had all been exposed to, and had received formal instruction in, the past progressive and simple past verb forms. Most of their choices of verb forms were the same as those of a small group of native speakers, indicating that in general, they understood the proper use of the forms. Further, most of them indicated that their usage was based on whether they perceived action as continuing or completed, which was appropriate. However, their past experience and education had led some of them to some unusual or erroneous perceptions about the correct use of the forms.

The study instrument that I created, although unusual for research in morphological aspect in that it used both pictures and text to tell short stories, was a reasonably effective way to learn about the participants' comprehension of the verb

forms. The worksheets gave multiple opportunities for choosing between past progressive and simple past. The interviews yielded considerable information on the thoughts of the participants regarding their choices, and thus the extent of their understanding as well as their misconceptions. The retells indicated what forms the participants would have used in their L1, and this in some cases clarified my understanding of their thoughts.

Literature Review Revisited

As indicated in Chapter Two, current research on aspect in second language acquisition has focused on the Aspect and Discourse hypotheses. My study provided minimal corroboration for the Aspect Hypothesis. As a snapshot study, it did not look at whether individual participants increased their use of progressive over time for accomplishment verbs. Furthermore, there was no correlation between use of progressive for achievement verbs and years of English study. Due to design flaws, the study did not test the Discourse Hypothesis.

One contribution of my study was to give insight into the interlanguage of the participants in their own words. Like the work of Liskin-Gasparro (2000) and Collins (2005) it used immediate retrospective interviews to have participants explain their choice of verb forms. Their explanations indicated areas of understanding and of confusion. Another contribution concerned the study instrument. I believe that my use of short stories using both pictures and text had not been used before for research in comprehension of aspect.

Implications for Teaching

This project gave me various insights into ESL teaching. I had hoped that the participants' answers would be varied, and they were. Each different answer suggests a slight variation on ways to teach. From this study, I developed the following suggestions:

- After teaching a rule (either by stating it or by having students discover it) make sure all students can express it correctly as well as use it correctly.
Provide enough situations to uncover misconceptions.
- To avoid the situation of Participant 8, who got the meanings of the two verb forms reversed, have students practice new forms thoroughly.
- Irregular verbs in English can be a significant barrier. Students will be more likely to learn them if they understand why they are useful. For example, show that that sometimes using the simple past form will communicate better than the past progressive.
- In an ABE setting, ESL students will vary widely as to their level of formal education, experience learning English in classes, and kind and extent of communication in English outside the classroom. It is possible that they will have collected a variety of misremembered or misunderstood grammatical "rules" from their past instruction. Teachers will be better able to serve the differing needs of their students if they ask for the reasoning behind students' apparent errors.
- In addition, because of their variation in background, it is quite possible that the students in any particular classroom will not have learned or even been

exposed to the grammatical rules addressed in prior chapters or volumes of their current textbooks. Accordingly, I believe that ABE students would be well served by more extensive and frequent review of such rules than called for in many ABE syllabi.

- Some participants focused on having two actions related by “while.” Students had trouble with this concept; three of them misstated how “while” can affect meaning. This is not surprising; a widely-used grammar book uses past progressive in *while*-clauses specifically to teach the contrast between simple past and past progressive (Azar & Hagen, 2006). The text does state that *while*-clause verbs are “often [rather than always] past progressive” (p. 282) but my own experience in using this text is that students have trouble absorbing both the typical usage and this subtle disclaimer at the same time. Accordingly, situations like these need to be taught carefully and *more than once*, taking considerable care that the rules are understood, used, and remembered correctly.
- “Used the same choice as would have in Spanish” was a reason given by four of the participants. This language transfer is a common strategy for learners (Selinker, 1969). Since Spanish and English are similar in most cases, it is not necessarily a bad strategy. However, Participants 3 and 6 made different choices for item 4 on Worksheet B “While father (was reading) (read) the next page” even though both gave “same as Spanish” as their reason. They both used the past progressive form on their retells. Perhaps a lesson that can

be drawn from this is that teachers should be clear enough in their explanations so that students can accurately assess whether syntactic or lexical transfer from L1 is appropriate.

- Some of the participants who exhibited the greatest comprehension of the verb forms had the least amount of formal English education. It may be that they learned the forms more authentically and intuitively by using English in real contexts in the U.S. rather than only in classrooms. ESL teachers can help their students by encouraging them to use their emerging language ability outside the classroom as well as by providing opportunities for authentic production through classroom activities.
- The classroom itself can provide an authentic context for teaching these verb forms. For example, students can classify classroom-related actions by duration: long (*e.g.* talk to your classmate, do grammar exercises, watch a video) or short (*e.g.* look at the clock, walk into the room, knock on the door, take off glasses). Students being introduced to the verb forms could act out a pair of the activities, one long and one short, while learning: *While Student A was [long-duration verb + ing], Student B [short-duration verb + ed]* and *Student A was [long-duration verb + ing] when Student B [short-duration verb + ed]*. Classroom discussion could confirm students' comprehension of the sequence of events, and that the short action was completed, whereas the long action either continued or was interrupted. A subsequent lesson could present sentences with *while* and *when* in which both verbs are of similar

duration to make students aware that both verbs in such sentences can have the same aspect. Finally, in a more advanced course, students could use classroom-related actions to help learn how the choice of aspect in sentences with *when* can differentiate causation from mere juxtaposition of events, as discussed in Chapter One. They could compare *When the bell rang, the teacher was giving a test* with *When the bell rang, the teacher gave the test* and then construct similar sentences using pairs of long and short duration actions as mentioned above.

Limitations

This was a very small study. The eight participants were the students who happened to attend class on the days the interviews had been scheduled; a fairly random group, given the spotty attendance in that setting. Five of them had more formal education than is typical for ABE students. They were all L1 Spanish speakers. Therefore, the results can not be generalized, either to other Spanish-speaking ELLs or to those with other L1s.

The study did not directly address the question with which I began my research. I wanted to know why students used the verb forms incorrectly or infrequently, but ended up pursuing a more limited question concerning what they understood about the use of those forms.

The study produced limited data. Each participant spent about 15 minutes completing worksheets and 30 minutes in an interview involving stimulated recall and

retellings of the stories on the worksheets. In addition, the participants' responses to the stimulated recall question for each item ("Why did you choose that verb form?") did not always answer the question. In particular, one participant gave a usable reason for only one of her 18 choices, while the other participants gave an average of 10.7 usable reasons. Accordingly, the information derived about their interlanguage regarding the verb forms in question is less than might have been obtained by more extensive or varied research tools.

Finally, the study does not provide insight into whether the participants' verb form choices were influenced by the Discourse Hypothesis. Although Worksheet B was intended to have distinguishable foreground and background elements, the design was flawed (as demonstrated in Appendix C), and so this was not the case.

Suggestions for Future Research

The participants in this study came from three different ESL class levels, and the study took place in the middle of a term. It would be interesting to repeat this study using students at only one level, at both the beginning and end of a term in which one of the topics covered was the use of past progressive versus simple past verb forms. Adding a production component to this comprehension study would also indicate the extent to which participants' use of the forms correlated with their comprehension. Adding a production element would also provide more insight into why these particular forms are so difficult and why they are often used incorrectly or infrequently. It would also be interesting to incorporate one or more stories that had true differentiation between

foreground and background elements, to add to research about the varying influence of the Discourse and Aspect hypotheses on learner acquisition of temporal morphology.

There is very little current morphology/syntax research on ELLs in the Adult Basic Education system. This was a very small study, but its results indicate that the research tools and techniques I used can provide useful information on such students. It would be interesting to repeat this study with ELLs in ABE whose L1s were different. Whether these new groups gave similar or different reasons for their choices than the present study's participants would give more insight into teaching aspect to all ELLs.

Communicating and Using Results

There are various ways I can communicate the results of this study. I am looking forward to discussing them informally with other ESL teachers I encounter at work. The results can be presented more formally at professional meetings or workshops. I can also pass them on to volunteer tutors and classroom assistants.

I have already begun using the results of the study in my own classroom. Although my current students are relative beginners compared to the participants in the study, I have nonetheless been able to act on some of the recommendations I outlined above. For grammar points in the current lessons, as well as those previously covered, I encourage the students to articulate the rules, provide opportunity for practice, probe for misconceptions, and ask students to explain their reasoning when they make errors.

Producing and writing this study has had an unexpected result for me. I find that I am reading scholarly articles with different eyes. I now know a little of what it takes to

go from being curious about an educational topic to discovering what is already known about it, refining a research question, designing a data collection tool, collecting and analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and writing about the whole process. It has made me much more appreciative of scholarship in general.

Comprehension of morphological aspect is challenging for English language learners. This study elicited information from the learners themselves concerning their areas of understanding and of confusion. These findings in turn led me to develop recommendations for teaching. I hope that the results of the study and my recommendations will be useful to other ESL teachers.

Appendix A

Text of the Worksheets by Frame

Worksheet A: Marta's Tower

- Marta (was making) (made) a tower out of blocks. She (was using) (used) black blocks for the bottom.
- Marta (was counting) (counted) the blocks when Jose (was walking) (walked) to the tower.
- Jose (was telling) (told) a joke. Marta (was listening) (listened) to him.
- Marta (was laughing) (laughed) so much that she fell on the tower.

Worksheet B: In the Kitchen

- Father (was reading) (read) a long letter from Sue. Mother (was mixing) (mixed) eggs, milk and butter for a cake.
- Mother (was adding) (added) flour and sugar.
- While Father (was reading) (read) the next page of the letter, the cake (was baking) (baked) in the oven. Mother (was making) (made) a doctor's appointment on the phone.
- Mother told Father, "I (was making) (made) a cake and now I'm hungry!"

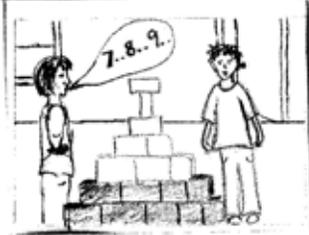
Worksheet C: Stan's Job

- Stan and Fred both needed jobs. When he heard that the Acme Company had some jobs open, Stan (was driving) (drove) to Fred's house.
- Fred didn't go to Acme with Stan. Stan (was waiting) (waited) in a long line to get a job application.
- Stan went back and told Fred, "While you were sitting here, I (was doing) (did) something important."
- The next morning, he (was accepting) (accepted) his new job.

Appendix B

Reproductions of Worksheets

Worksheet A

WORKSHEET A	MARTA'S TOWER	Your initials _____ Date _____
		
<p>Marta (was making) (made) a tower out of blocks. She (was using) (used) black blocks for the bottom.</p>	<p>Marta (was counting) (counted) the blocks when Jose (was walking) (walked) to the tower.</p>	
		
<p>Jose (was telling) (told) a joke. Marta (was listening) (listened) to him.</p>	<p>Marta (was laughing) (laughed) so much that she fell on the tower.</p>	

Worksheet B

WORKSHEET B

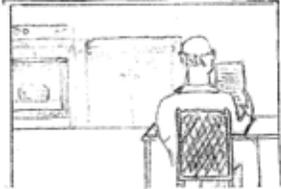
IN THE KITCHEN



Father (was reading) (read) a long letter from Sue.
Mother (was mixing) (mixed) eggs, milk and butter for a cake.



Mother (was adding) (added) flour and sugar.



While Father (was reading) (read) the next page of the letter,
the cake (was baking) (baked) in the oven. Mother
(was making) (made) a doctor's appointment on the phone.



Mother told Father, "I (was making) (made) a
cake and now I'm hungry!"

Worksheet C

WORKSHEET C



Stan and Fred both needed jobs. When he heard that the Acme Company had some jobs open, Stan (was driving) (drove) to Fred's home.

STAN'S JOB



Fred didn't go to Acme with Stan. Stan (was waiting) (waited) in a long line to get a job application.



Stan went back and told Fred, "While you were sitting here, I (was doing) (did) something important."



The next morning, he (was accepting) (accepted) his new job.

Appendix C

Analysis of Foreground and Background Elements in Worksheet B

Description of Picture	Text	Foreground (moves time forward) Background (elaborates on foreground events) or Other	Expected verb form choice based on native speaker input
Father sits at table, reading. Mother stands next to him. Table behind her shows mixing bowl with spoon, and broken eggshell.	Father [read] a long letter from Sue.	Foreground	Progressive
	Mother [mix] eggs, milk and butter for a cake.	Unclear. Text implies Foreground, but picture implies Other, because Mother's action had been interrupted or was already completed before the time depicted in the picture.	Either
Mother stands at the table, pouring sugar into the bowl.	Mother [add] flour and sugar.	Foreground	Either
Father sits reading. Cake is in oven.	While Father [read] the next page of the letter,	Foreground	Progressive
	the cake [bake] in the oven	Foreground	Progressive
	Mother [make] a doctor's appointment on the phone.	Foreground	Simple
Father and Mother face each other. Mother speaks.	Mother told Father,	Foreground	N/A – no participant choice
	I [make] a cake and now I'm hungry!"	Background. Mother refers to a topic time prior to her utterance.	Simple

Appendix D

Development of Expected Verb Form Choices

Item	My original expected choice	Native Speaker A	Native Speaker B	Native Speaker C	Revised expected choice
<u>Worksheet A</u>					
make tower	prog	prog	simple	prog	prog
use blocks	simple	simple	simple	prog	simple
count blocks	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog
walk to tower	either	simple	simple	prog	either
tell joke	same for	prog	simple	prog	same for
listen to him	both	simple	simple	prog	both
laugh	either	prog	simple	prog	either
<u>Worksheet B</u>					
read letter	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog
mix eggs	simple	simple	prog	prog	either
add flour	either	prog	simple	prog	either
read next pg	prog	prog	simple	prog	prog
bake in oven	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog
make appt	simple	simple	simple	prog	simple
make cake	simple	simple	simple	prog	simple
<u>Worksheet C</u>					
drive to Fred	either	simple	simple	simple	simple
wait in line	either	simple	simple	simple	simple
do something	simple	prog	prog	prog	prog
accept job	simple	simple	simple	simple	simple

Appendix E

Announcement to Prospective Participants

I want to tell you about something special that will happen in class within the next week or so. One of the other CLUES tutors is a student at Hamline University in St. Paul. Her name is Andrea Feshbach. She wants to teach ESL in a regular school, and to get her Master's degree, she has to do a study (an investigation) using ESL students. I'll tell you more about the study, and then I'll ask you to participate in it. You don't have to agree to participate, but it would help her if you do.

On the day of the study, our first class activity will be doing some grammar worksheets about verbs. Each worksheet will have a story in pictures and words, and the questions will be about the stories. Everyone in the class will do this. It will take about 20 minutes.

Then, students who are participating in the study will go to a different room, one at a time, and have an interview for about 20 minutes. The name of the interviewer is also Andrea, but it's a different person. The interview will be in Spanish, and the interviewer will ask your reason for each answer on your worksheet. The worksheet is designed so that all the answers are acceptable. What will be important is your reasons for the answers you choose. Then, the interviewer will ask you to look at the pictures again and tell the story in Spanish. The interview will be tape recorded. Later, the interviewer will translate the tape into English, and that is what Andrea will use for her study. Your name will not be used in the study. You will be missing what goes on in this class during your interview, but if you wish, Andrea will be happy to provide some extra tutoring to make up for the class time you miss.

The U.S. government has rules that Andrea must follow for her study. One rule is that people in the study must give consent. This means that you have to sign a paper that says that you know what you will be doing for the study, and that you agree to do it. I have copies of the form in English and Spanish for you to take home and look at. If you have questions about the form, the interviewer will answer them next week.

It would really help Andrea if you participate in her study. All you will have to do is one interview. The information will help Andrea understand what ESL students know about verbs in English, and maybe lead to a better way to teach about verbs. It will also be interesting for you.

Appendix F

Informed Consent Documents in English and Spanish

Dear Students:

I am working on my Masters in ESL at Hamline University. I am going to be doing some research with adults who are learning English, and I would like to invite you to participate.

Verb forms can be difficult for learners. The purpose of my study is to find out the reasons that students give for choosing between different verb forms. I would like to discover what students have learned about verb forms, and how they use that knowledge. Research and writing are dynamic activities, which means that during the study I may learn things that change what I want to concentrate on.

On the day of my study, everyone in the class will do some worksheets about past tense verbs. Each worksheet will have a story in pictures and questions about the stories.

If you agree to participate in my study, you will then do an interview in a different room for about 20 minutes. The interview will be **in Spanish**, and the interviewer will ask your reasons for each answer on the worksheet. You will also look at the pictures again and tell the story in Spanish. The interview will be tape-recorded and then translated into English on another tape. I would like to use your worksheets and tapes in my research.

My research will be public information. A copy of my study will be in the Bush Library at Hamline, and it may be published. Your name will not be used in the study, but I will ask what country you come from, how long you have been in the U.S. and other questions like that. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your relationship with CLUES. You can also withdraw your consent at any time.

Risks and benefits: other than using your time doing the interview, the study has no risks to you. You may benefit from thinking about verb forms, and you will help me and other Hamline students become better ESL teachers.

If you have any questions now or during the study, please call me at [telephone #]. Thank you very much,

Andrea Feshbach [date]

I agree to participate in this research on verb forms.

Signature

Date

Name

Estimados estudiantes:

Actualmente soy estudiante del departamento de educación en Hamline University, debido a esto estoy realizando una investigación sobre el aprendizaje del inglés para adultos, por lo que agradecería su valiosa colaboración.

El propósito de mi estudio es averiguar por qué los estudiantes tienen problemas con las distintas formas verbales en el pasado, descubrir lo que los estudiantes han aprendido sobre dichas formas y cómo las usarían en inglés. Como la investigación y la escritura son actividades dinámicas, es probable que pueda cambiar de tema durante el estudio, según lo que vaya aprendiendo.

En el día del estudio, daré a cada estudiante unas hojas de ejercicios, en cada hoja de ejercicio se contará una historia por medio de dibujos y texto, y tendrá algunas preguntas para contestar.

Si usted acepta participar en el estudio, tendrá que realizar una entrevista en otra sala, la cual durará aproximadamente 20 minutos. **La entrevista será en español,** la persona que hará la entrevista le preguntará por qué ha elegido su respuesta, también va a repasar los dibujos y volver a contar la misma historia en español. La entrevista será grabada y traducida al inglés en otra cinta, los resultados de las hojas y las cintas serán utilizados para mi investigación.

Dichos resultados serán accesibles al público, una copia va a estar en la librería Bush de Hamline University. Su nombre no va a aparecer en el estudio, pero puede especificar su país de origen, cuánto tiempo ha vivido en Estados Unidos y otros datos. Si no acepta participar en el estudio, esto no afectará su relación con la escuela de idiomas. Puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento.

Riesgos y beneficios: No existe riesgo alguno hacia su persona si acepta participar en el estudio. Toma tiempo para la entrevista, pero le puede beneficiar saber más sobre las formas verbales. También me puede ayudar a mí y a los otros estudiantes de Hamline para mejorar la enseñanza de inglés.

Si tiene preguntas ahora o durante el estudio me puede llamar a [telephone #].

Muchas gracias,

Andrea Feshbach

[date]

Acepto participar en la investigación sobre las formas verbales.

Firma

Fecha

Nombre

Appendix G

Verb Form Choices by Worksheet Item and Participant

Item	Expected choice	Participant							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Worksheet A									
make tower	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog	simp	prog	simp	simp
use blocks	simp	prog	simp	simp	prog	simp	prog	simp	simp
count blocks	prog	prog	prog	simp	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog
walk/tower	either	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog	simp
tell joke	both same	prog	simp	prog	prog	simp		simp	
listen to him	(1 choice)	prog	simp	simp	prog	simp	prog	prog	simp
laugh	either	prog	simp	simp	prog	simp	prog	prog	
Worksheet B									
read letter	prog	prog	prog	simp	prog	simp	simp	prog	simp
mix eggs	either	simp	prog	prog	simp	simp	simp	prog	prog
add flour	either	prog	simp	simp	prog	simp	simp	simp	simp
read next pg	prog	prog	prog	simp	prog	prog	prog	prog	
bake in oven	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog	prog	simp	prog
make appt	simp	simp	simp	simp	prog	simp	prog	simp	prog
make cake	simp	simp	prog		simp		prog	simp	
Worksheet C									
drive to Fred	simp	prog	simp	prog	prog	simp	n/a	simp	simp
wait in line	simp	prog	prog	simp	prog	simp	n/a	simp	simp
do something	prog	simp	prog	simp	prog	prog	simp		
accept job	simp	prog	simp						
# and %		5/13	2/13	6/12	4/13	2/12	5/10	3/12	3/9
unexpected		38%	15%	50%	31%	17%	50%	25%	33%

Prog past progressive
 Yellow cell unexpected choice
 Blank cell comprehension error

Simp simple past
 n/a no choice made for the item

Appendix H

Reasons for Choices by Item and Participant

Item	Participant							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Worksheet A								
make tower	O/C		O/C		rule	rule	O/C	O/C
use blocks	O/C		O/C		rule	rule	O/C	
count blocks	O/C		O/C		rule	easier		O/C
walk to tower	O/C		O/C		rule	easier		O/C
tell joke	O/C		O/C		O/C			
listen to him	O/C		rule		O/C	easier		
laugh	O/C		rule	O/C			Span	
Worksheet B								
read letter	O/C		Span		rule	O/C	rule	Span
mix eggs	O/C		O/C	O/C	O/C	Span	O/C	O/C
add flour	O/C		rule		O/C		O/C	O/C
read next page			Span	O/C	rule	Span	O/C	
bake in oven	O/C			O/C	rule		rule	
make appt	O/C		rule		no picture		rule	no picture
make a cake				O/C			O/C	
Worksheet C								
drive to Fred's					O/C		O/C	O/C
wait in line	O/C				O/C		O/C	O/C
do something		rule						
accept job							O/C	O/C

O/C	Ongoing or completed action
Span	Participant used English for what would have been chosen in Spanish
Rule	Participant based choice on an invented "rule" about English
No Picture	No picture of action, so participant assumed it was finished
Easier	Easier to always use past progressive so participant does not have to learn irregular verb form for simple past
Yellow cell	Unexpected worksheet choice for which a reason was given

Appendix I

Comparison of Verb Aspect on Worksheet and in Retell, by Item and Participant

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	# aspect changes	# aspect matches
make tower	p/p	p/p	p/p	p/p	s/p	p/s	s/p	s/p	4	4
use blocks					s/s	p/s		s/s	1	2
count blocks	p/p	p/p			p/p	p/p	p/p	p/p	0	6
walk to tower	p/p	s/s			p/s		p/s	s/p	3	2
tell joke	p/p	s/s		p/s	s/s		s/s		1	4
listen to him	p/p	s/p		p/s	s/s		p/p		2	3
laugh	p/p			p/p	s/s		p/p		0/ tot 11	4/tot 25
read letter	p/p	p/p	s/s	p/p	s/p	s/p	p/p	s/p	3	5
mix eggs		p/p		s/p	s/p	s/p	p/p	p/s	4	2
add flour		s/p	s/p	p/p	s/p				3	1
read next page	p/p	p/p	s/p	p/p	p/p	p/p	p/p		1	6
bake in oven		p/p		p/p	p/p		s/p	p/s	2	3
make appt				p/p	s/s	p/p	s/s		0	2
make cake				s/s			s/s		0/ tot 13	2/tot 21
drive to Fred's	p/p	s/p		p/p			s/s	s/p	2	3
wait in line	p/p			p/p			s/p	s/p	2	2
do something	s/s			p/p	p/p				0	3
accept job	p/p	s/s		s/s	s/s		s/s	p/p	0/ tot 4	6/tot 14
# corresponding verbs	12	12	4	15	15	7	15	10		90
# aspect matches	12	9	2	12	10	3	11	3		62
# changes	0	3	2	3	5	4	4	7	28	
# changes p to s	0	0	0	2	1	2	1	2	8	

p past progressive s simple past

The entry before the slash is the verb form chosen on the worksheet

The entry after the slash is the verb form used in the retell

Gray highlighting indicates invented rule (on items with retell verbs)

Yellow cell indicates unexpected worksheet choice (on items with retell verbs)

Bold face indicates aspect mismatch

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